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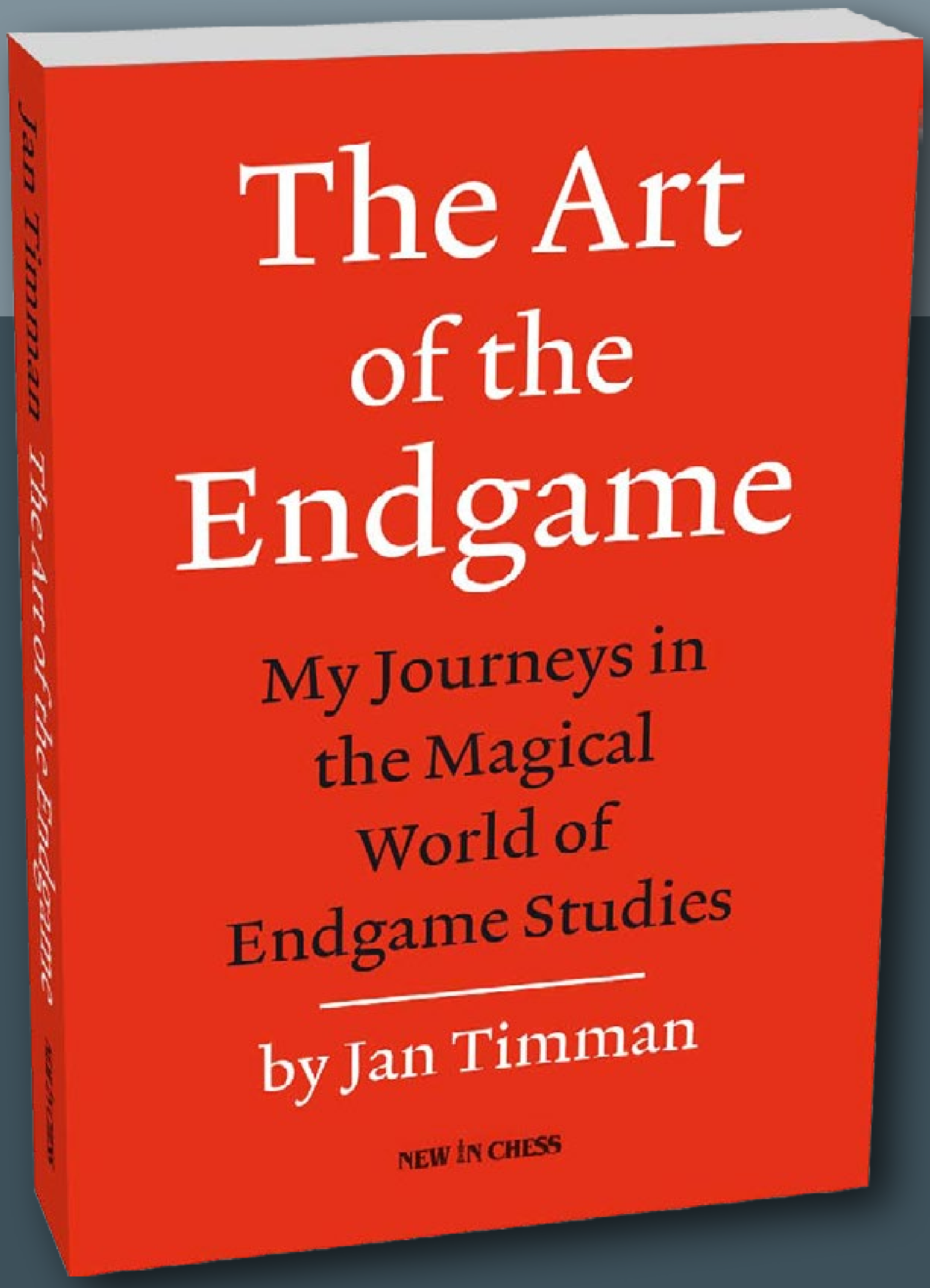
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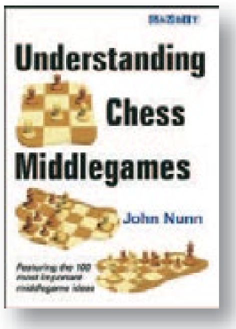

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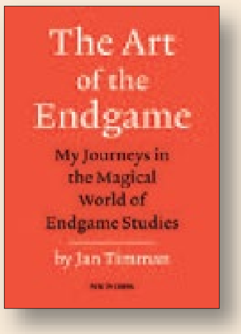

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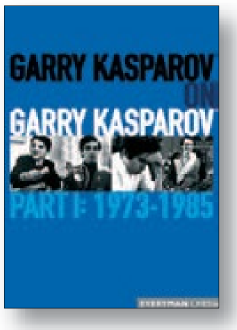

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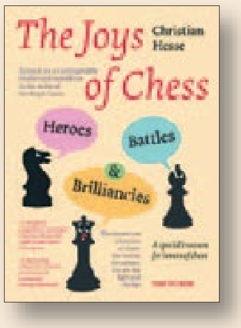

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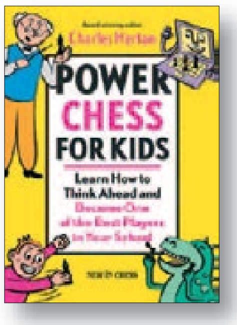

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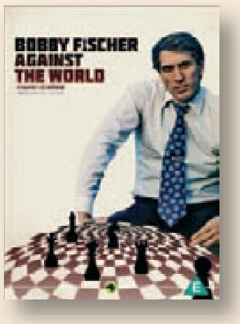

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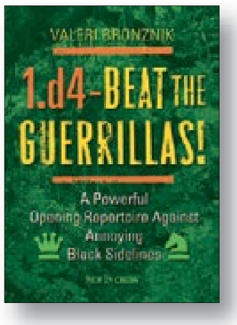

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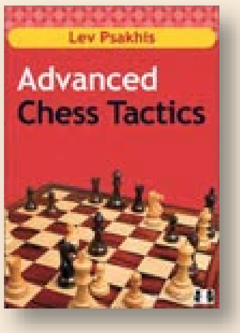

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2011 Issue 8

NEW IN CHESS

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12 Carlsen perseveres and prevails in Moscow
In the last round of an epic Tal Memorial Magnus Carlsen ground down Hikaru Nakamura to edge out Levon Aronian by the tiniest of margins. The Norwegian magnanimously recapped: 'Perhaps Aronian even played better than me', only to claim almost in the same breath, and with a grin, that he felt he was still the rightful winner: 'Rules are rules, of course!'

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Over the past year viewers of major events in Russia have been treated to top-class live video coverage. Macauley Peterson stopped by Moscow for a 'behind the scenes' tour at the Tal Memorial.

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> 'It is clear that Carlsen is now the best player in the world. There is no question about that. The match everyone would like to see now is one between Magnus and Aronian.'
> – Garry Kasparov

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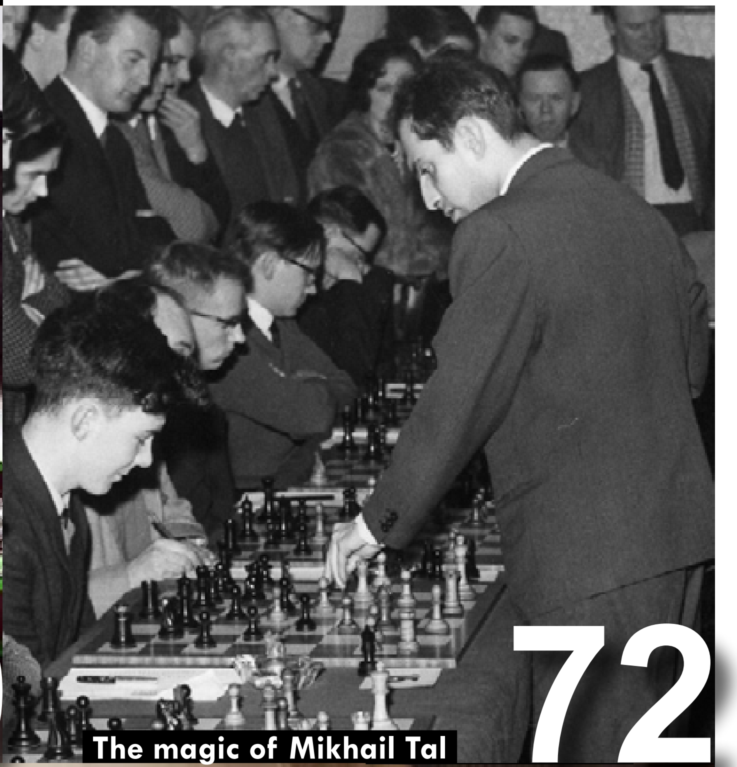

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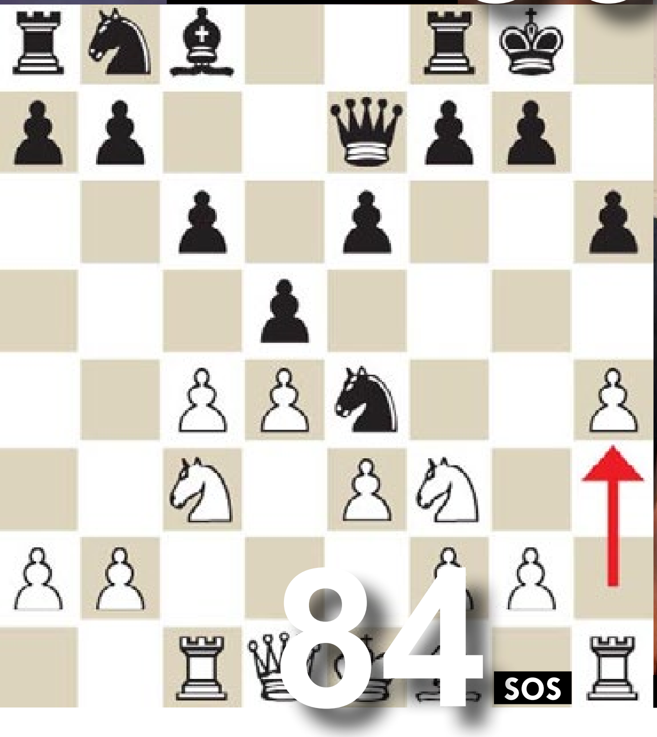

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PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
Vladimir Barsky, Maria Bolshakova, Alexander Motylev
COVER PHOTO
Magnus Carlsen: New In Chess

Polgar Day

Gone are the days when you could see them play happily together in one tournament and easily photograph all three of them. These days the Polgar sisters are spread over the globe with Susan (formerly Zsuzsa) promoting chess at Lubbock University Texas, USA, Sofia living in Israel, and Judit in Budapest, the Hungarian capital where it all started. But once a year the old times are revived on Polgar Day, a grand reunion that brings the oldest two sisters back to their home country.

Judit demonstrates that chess is a piece of chocolate.

The fifth edition of the Aquaprofit Polgar Chess Day was the most grandiose so far, with close to 2,000 children and guests taking part and an abundance of VIPs such as motorcycling world champion Gabor Talmacsi, conductor Ivan Fisher and chess legend Pal Benko. With an incredible range of activities all through the day the programme was jaw-dropping. There was a simul against 18 mayors from all over the country, with the winner getting a public playground worth $ 5,000, a signing session of the second volume of *Chess Playground*, an elementary course written by Judit and illustrated by Sofia, a live chess game with Judit acting as the black queen, a 100-board simul split between the sisters, Chocolate Chess with the players eating the pieces they captured, children's tournaments, masterclasses and what not. One of the guests could not actually make it, but Garry Kasparov, keen advocate of chess in the schools projects these days, called in via Skype to express his support for the event.

POLGÁR JUDIT
KÖNYVE!
AKKJÁ
TÉR
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ZÓTÉ

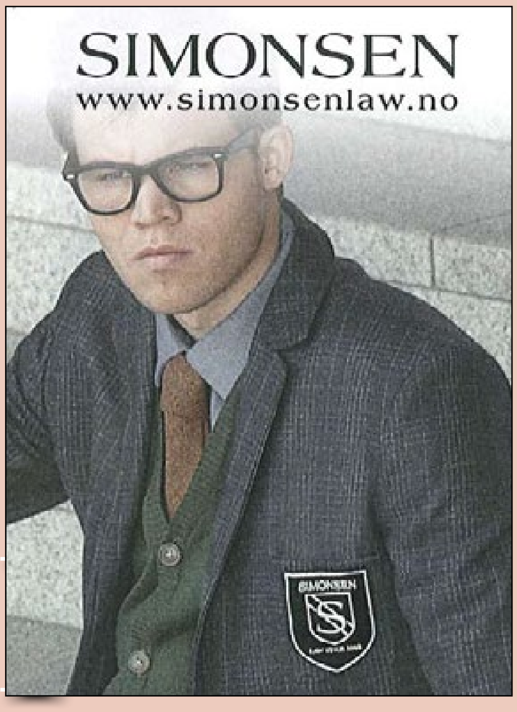
The Polgar sisters today. Sofia, Judit and Susan with motorcycling champion Gabor Talmacsi.

Sincere Flattery

'I can confidently say that the move 2.c3 has fed me and my family for almost 40 years' wrote Evgeny Sveshnikov in the introduction to his magnum opus, *The Complete c3 Sicilian*, published by New In Chess in September 2010. Right from its publication the book has been a major hit with retailers, reviewers and readers all over the world. Apparently, the success of the book (and the feeding potential of the move 2.c3) did not pass unnoticed, as witness the appearance, earlier this year, of a DVD on the same opening. The DVD not only bore a strong resemblance to Sveshnikov's book, it even cheerfully claimed that it was based on Sveshnikov's book! The DVD was published by an American grandmaster whose name we will not mention here. Feeling sincerely flattered, but also seriously flustered, we contacted the publisher, and we are happy to say that this matter has been resolved without great trouble. The distribution of the DVD has been stopped and compensation has been agreed on.

Magnus and Matt

As bus and billboard watchers in the over 60 countries where G-Star Raw operates will have noticed, Magnus Carlsen has been replaced as the male face of the Dutch fashion brand. For the new collection, the fashion house has enlisted American actor, director, musician and performance artist Vincent Gallo to portray their philosophy. Does this mean that Carlsen's modelling days are over? It doesn't look like it if we go by the new brochure of his sponsor Simonsen, the Norwegian law firm, which has a stylish portrait of a well-groomed and immaculately dressed Carlsen on the cover. Inside we read: 'We think we share something with Magnus Carlsen: the strategic and focused way of thinking, playing and living which makes him a role model to all providers of competence-based business. Together with his intensity and spark, Magnus Carlsen represents the Simonsen values to the fullest.'



Magnus Carlsen: 'Intensity and spark.'

Which is no doubt true, but the law firm forgets to mention another of their qualities: a fine sense of humour. It has been noted before that Carlsen can look eerily like American actor Matt Damon, and this photo is no exception. But with the glasses and the retro fashion that he is wearing he very much looks like Damon in one of his star roles, that of Tom Ripley in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, based on Patricia Highsmith's classic. It's a fine humoristic twist for a law firm with a focus on 'quality, integrity and teamwork' to present their role model as the spitting image of a character whose talents have been described as 'forgery, lying and impersonation'!

Matt Damon: star role in Magnus Carlsen biopic?

Jan Timman 60 Jubilee Tourney

New In Chess announces a composition tourney to commemorate the 60th birthday of Jan Timman, grandmaster and author of *The Art of the Endgame* and several other fine books on endgame studies

No set theme. Twins and/or joint studies allowed.

The judge of this event will be Jan Timman himself

Money and book prizes, honourable mentions and commendations will be awarded

Entries should include the name of the composer(s), postal address, diagram with full solution (preferably with a pgn-file attached) Please send before June 30, 2012 to the tourney director: René Olthof, c/o New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093, NL 1810 KB Alkmaar, The Netherlands, E-mail: raja@newinchess.com

The winners will be announced in New In Chess

Marc Lang dethrones Don Miguel

It seemed like a feat that would remain unchallenged forever, but apparently there comes an end to everything. Sixty-four years after Miguel Najdorf set his stupendous blindfold record, German FIDE Master Marc Lang raised the bar one notch higher in a blindfold simul in Sontheim, Germany, that lasted almost 21 hours and ended at 6.59 a.m. on November 26. In 1947 Don Miguel baffled the world by playing 45 opponents simultaneously without seeing the board in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Having warmed up with an exhibition against 35 opponents last year, surpassing the previous European record of 34 games set by George Koltanowski at Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1937, Lang now also holds the world record with 46 opponents. Thanks to his sponsor Astra Tech Dental, 41-year-old Marc Lang (Elo rating 2306) took several months off to prepare for his attempt. His main aim was to play fast, as 'the longer it lasts, the harder it gets'. His strategy was successful, as his world record took him two hours less than his European record against fewer opponents.

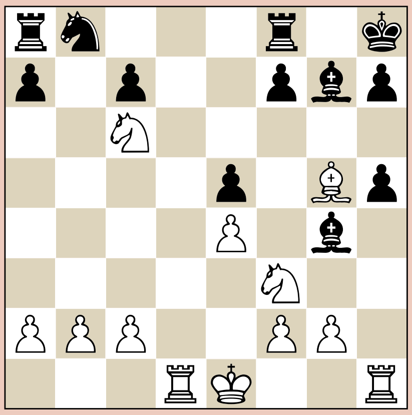
Blindfold expert Vlastimil Hort commented on the games and lavished praise on Lang's play. Here's a sample.

KF 9.9 – B06
Marc Lang
Benjamin Aldag
Sontheim 2011 blind simul

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♗c4 e6 5.♗b3 ♘e7 6.♘c3 0-0 7.h4 e5?

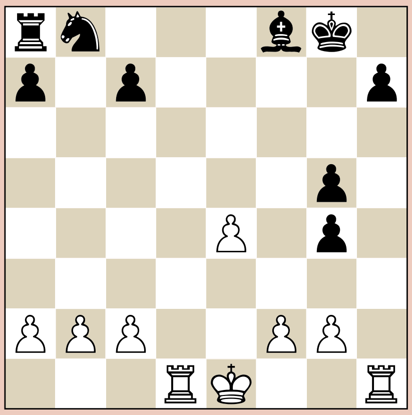
A weak move, blocking the g7 bishop.

8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♗g5 ♕xd1+ 10.♖xd1 ♘ec6 11.h5 gxh5 12.♘d5 ♘a6 13.♗a4 ♗g4 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♘e7+ ♔h8 16.♘xc6 ♘b8



17.♘cxe5!! Marc Lang's favourite move from the exhibition, which gives White a winning position in all lines. **17...f6** In case of 17...♗xe5 18.♘xe5 ♗xd1 19.♗f6+ ♔g8 20.♔xd1 Black will be helpless against ♖xh5-g5+. **18.♘xg4 hxg4 19.♘h4! fxg5 20.♘g6+ ♔g8 21.♘xf8 ♗xf8**

A promo photo of Marc Lang preparing for his blindfold record. Reality was tougher.



22.♖d8! The final point. Black cannot free himself. **22...♔g7 23.♔e2 ♗e7 24.♖c8 ♗d6 25.c4 ♔f6 26.♖xh7 c5 27.b4** The passed pawn decides the issue. **27...cxb4 28.c5 ♗e5 29.c6 ♘xc6 30.♖xa8 ♘d4+ 31.♔d3 ♔g6 32.♖d7 ♘c6 33.♖c8 ♘a5 34.♖d5 b3 35.♖xa5** Black resigned. ■

Your Move

Sport and politics

In a recent event in Corsica, an Iranian GM refused to play an Israeli player, prompting the organizer to not only give him a forfeit loss, but also expel him from the event.

My point of view is that FIDE and organizers need to come up with and announce a policy, where one must play anyone and everyone they are paired against in a FIDE recognized tournament, or risk a forfeit (rated loss), expulsion from the event, and a disciplinary hearing. That means that all players will know in advance of this policy, and will have the choice to enter or not to enter events with Israelis or any other players with whom they (or their government) may have an issue.

With time, as they see they cannot participate in nearly any events, the burden will shift to them/their countries to change this ridiculous unsportsmanlike behaviour. Israel is at 'war status' with several countries, and yet its athletes/competitors have *never refused* to compete against anyone. In a 2004 Chess Cafe column, noted International Arbiter Geurt Gijssen opines in favor of changing the pairings whenever possible, without changing the outcome of the event. His rational is that it is those players' governments who disallow them to play against certain opponents. I believe that he and others who may support this approach, agree in silence to an unacceptable status quo, and 'understand' the dilemma, rather than fight the issue!

As someone else said before me, if it's accepted, why limit it to Israel or a country!? Soon any player could state in advance that he/she refuses to play Caucasians, or Blacks. Maybe a WGM can refuse to play males – that can prove convenient en route to winning or sharing first in many huge events. It's time for FIDE to stand by its motto of Gens Una Sumus and work to abolish any connection between politics and sports.

Aviv Friedman
Teaneck, NJ, USA

A terrific movie

Your recent pieces by Genna Sosonko gives us all new insights into Soviet chess history. They are wonderful and I thank you. The recent article on Boris Weinstein and his relationship with David Bronstein in New In Chess 2011/6 would make a terrific movie. I've always thought that Bronstein's loss to Botvinnik had less to do with Bronstein's fears than his political beliefs. A win by him might have compromised him within the system, as well as threatened the Soviet Jewish community of chess players. Perhaps, I'm wrong. But there is enough tension in this story for a great film. It calls for more. Please keep Sosonko digging and publishing. It's a great vein of chess history to mine.

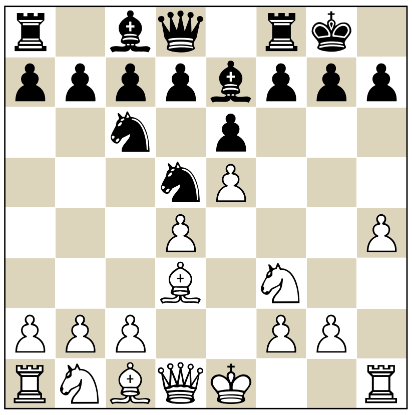
Peter A. Lupsha
Tome, NM, USA

♗xh7+: The early years

With great pleasure I read Luke McShane's review of *Sacking the Citadel* by Jon Edwards in New In Chess 2011/5.

Although I have not yet read the book, it seems to me that it includes a big omission in the historical part.

Mr. McShane writes that the first example of the sacrifice belongs to Gioacchino Greco, the great Calabrian, due to the following line: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.h4 0-0 6.e5 ♘d5



7.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 8.♘g5+ ♗xg5 9.hxg5+ ♔g8 10.♕h5 f5 11.g6 ♖e8 12.♕h8 mate, that I suppose comes from the book on Greco's games, printed in London in 1656. If not, it is certainly included in the first French edition of the book *Le iev des eschecs* of 1669 ('The game of chess', available as pdf file on the net).

It should be noted that in the same book three other lines are included with the same theme. In the so-called *Livre première* 'Chapitre XXVIII' and 'Chapitre XXIX' we see the following variations:

- 1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.h4 0-0 6.e5 ♘d5 7.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 8.♘g5+ ♗xg5 9.hxg5+ ♔g6 10.♕h5+ ♔f5 11.♕h7+ g6 12.♕h3+ ♔e4 13.♕d3 mate.

Readers can send their opinions to:
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- 1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.h4 0-0 6.e5 ♘d5 7.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 8.♘g5+ ♔g6 9.h5+ ♔h6 10.♘xf7+ ♔h7 11.♘xd8 and wins.
- 1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗d3 ♘c6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.h4 0-0 6.e5 ♘d5 7.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 8.♘g5+ ♔g6 9.h5+ ♔f5 10.g4 mate.

In the following centuries these same lines were copied by many authors (Hirschel, Lewis, Von der Lasa, Van der Linde, Hoffmann and White, just to mention the most important ones), and probably by those who inserted the moves for the various online databases!

Little known is that Gioacchino Greco described similar attacks in his manuscripts of the years 1619-1625. In the first group of these treatises were used the Italian rules for castling (free castling) and en passant capture (not allowed as the pawns had the right to 'passar battaglia'):

The first example is included in the first treatise of the *Boncompagni 3* tome, which must have been written about 1619: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗d3 ♘c6 4.c3 ♗e7 5.♘f3 0-0 (with ...♔g8 and ...♖e8) 6.h4 d6 7.e5 ♘d5 8.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 9.♘g5+ ♔g8 10.♕h5 ♗xg5 11.hxg5 f5 12.♕h8+ ♔f7 13.g6+ ♔xg6 14.♕h5 mate. The tome is now in the Vatican Library in Rome.

The following year Gioacchino Greco wrote another little treatise which was dedicated to a certain 'monsignor Corsini', now in the 'biblioteca Corsiniana', also in Rome. Here he developed the idea with many more lines, presenting the complete variations which follow the sacrifice.

Because of the brilliant variations Greco presented, the sacrifice ♗xh7+ has been regularly attributed to the Calabrois. However, Greco was not the real inventor of the idea of sacrificing the bishop with the idea of breaking open the fortress around the black king.

During his younger years, first in the house of the famous Sicilian player 'Mariano Marano' where he lived for some time, and later in the Roman houses of the Boncompagni family and the other Maecenases who offered him hospitality, he must have come across the book of Alessandro Salvio of 1604 entitled *Trattato dell'inventione et arte liberale del gioco di scacchi*. In Salvio's book the sacrifice was already analyzed with the following variations in chapter XIII:

- 1.e4 e6 2.d4 c6 3.♗d3 ♗e7 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.h4 0-0 (with ...♔g8 and ...♖e8) 6.e5 ♘d5 (best) 7.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 8.♘g5+ ♗xg5 9.hxg5+ (discovered check) 9...♔g6 10.♕h5+ ♔f5 (forced) 11.♕h3+ ♔g6 12.♕h7 mate. If 11...♔e4 12.♕d3 mate.

If 9...♔g8 10.♕h5 f6 (or 10...f5) mate follows after 11.♕h8+ ♔f7 12.g6+ ♔xg6 13.♕h5 mate.

In case of other 10th moves it will be mate after 11.♕h8+ and 12.♕... mate, or check with the pawn and mate with the queen.

Better is 10...♔f8 11.g6 fxg6 12.♕xg6 ♔g8 13.♗g5 ♘e7 14.♕h7+ ♔f8 15.♖h3 ♕a5+ 16.♘c3 (or 16.c3) 16...♘f5 17.♖f3 and after 18.g4 White will regain the piece and have a better game.

If 8...♔g6 9.h5+ will win the queen or it will be mate.

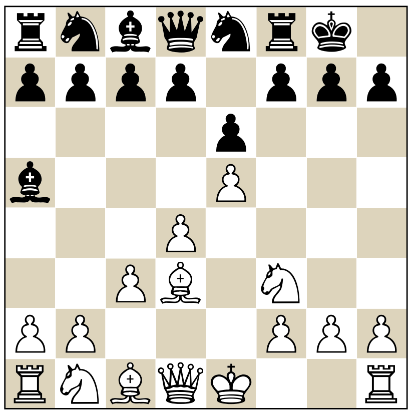
If 8...♔g8 9.♕h5 ♗xg5 (best) 10.hxg5 the game will conclude as indicated above.

However, it must be pointed out that the analysis of Alessandro Salvio may also have relied on an older source.

In the last quarter of the XVIth century, an Italian player wrote many treatises, but as they were never published, they remained unknown to the majority of chess players until 1843, when they were discovered by the Parisian collector Doazan. In that year he wrote an article in *La Palamede* about a manuscript he owned written by the Italian Giulio Cesare Polerio before 1600.

From his writings we know that the following variations were included:

- 1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♗b4+ 3.c3 ♗a5 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♗d3 0-0 6.e5 ♘e8



7.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 8.♘g5+ ♔g6 9.h4 f6 10.h5+.

- 1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♗b4+ 3.c3 ♗a5 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♗d3 0-0 6.e5 ♘d5 7.♗xh7+ ♔h8 8.♘g5 g6 9.♕g4 ♔g7 10.♘xf7 ♖xf7 11.♕xg6+ ♔f8 12.♗h6+ ♔e8 13.♕g8+ ♔e7 14.♗g5+.
- 1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♗e7 4.c3 ♘f6 5.♗d3 0-0 6.h4 d5 7.e5 ♘e8 8.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 9.♘g5+ ♗xg5 10.hxg5+.

In this analysis Doazan used the European form of castling and assuming that he translated the moves correctly, we must also assume that the analysis was written for someone living outside of Italy, as otherwise he would have used 'free castling'.

The same Polerio used the 'classical' form of castling in another manuscript (included in the above-mentioned *Boncompagni 3* codex, which was probably written in the first years of 1600):

1.e4 e6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗d3 ♗b4+ 4.c3 ♗a5 5.♘f3 0-0 6.e5 ♘d5 7.♗xh7+ and Black can take the bishop or not but will lose the game: 7...♔xh7 (7...♔h8 8.♘g5) 8.♘g5+.

It's a great pity for Greco fans, but on the basis of these facts, we should perhaps start to call the bishop sacrifice 'Polerio's mate', instead of Greco's!

One last piece of advice: don't believe in databases, as paper is still superior!

Giorgio Rigatti
Ruda (UD), Italy

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Congratulations to Jan Timman! On December 14, our co-editor-in-chief celebrates his 60th birthday. Forever young at heart and passionate about chess as ever, Jan can look back on a unique career. From Linares to Wijk aan Zee and from Mar del Plata to Bugojno, he won practically all the major tournaments around the globe, reached second place in the world rankings and twice qualified for the final of the Candidates' matches. Jan is also a prolific writer with classics such as *The Art of Chess Analysis* and *Curaçao 1962* to his name. His new book *The Art of the Endgame* is further testimony to his love for studies and his fame as a composer.

We hope his writings will adorn our pages for many years to come!

Jan Timman is interviewed by French television host Bruno Fuchs after defeating Garry Kasparov in the final of the 1991 Immopar Trophy in Paris. In the earlier rounds he eliminated Kamsky, Anand and Karpov.

With the margins and differences infinitesimally small, Magnus Carlsen kept a close eye on what his rivals were doing.

Magnus Carlsen perseveres and prevails in Pashkov House

NEW IN CHESS

With one game to play, doubts briefly crept in. 'I was sort of almost reconciling myself to the fact that someone else was going to win this,' Magnus Carlsen confessed after he had crowned yet another thrilling catch-up race. Luckily for the top-seed, that flitting moment of fatigue evaporated rapidly, and in the last round of an epic Tal Memorial the Norwegian ground down Hikaru Nakamura to edge out Levon Aronian by the tiniest of margins. Confirming his 2800 status, the Armenian played impressive chess and even rose to second place in the Live Ratings. Carlsen magnanimously recapped: 'Perhaps Aronian even played better than me,' only to claim almost in the same breath, and with a grin, that he felt he was still the rightful winner: 'Rules are rules, of course!' **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** reports from Moscow on the strongest elite gathering of the year, a tournament of such strength that World Champion Vishy Anand, his challenger Boris Gelfand and this year's Wijk aan Zee and Dortmund winners Hikaru Nakamura and Vladimir Kramnik didn't manage to win a single game!

The Ritz Carlton Hotel was once again the home of the grandmasters taking part in the Tal Memorial. It wouldn't be possible to find a more central, and more comfortable place to be lodged in the heart of Moscow, as a visit to the O2 Lounge on the top floor makes abundantly clear. This panorama bar gives you a spectacular view of the neighbouring Kremlin. Even the most 'modest' rooms in the Ritz Carlton are big and crammed with all the luxuries you can imagine, but a privileged few participants were pampered in mini-suites.

They were not the only stars staying in the hotel. For several days the lobby was regularly flooded by hordes

The Pashkov House, a historic Moscow landmark, was the venue of the 6th Tal Memorial.

of mainly women, elderly ladies in fur coats and younger representatives of the fair sex pushing their children forward to be greeted and blessed by the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church and their considerable entourage. Imposing head gear, more modest hats or no hats at all indicated the hierarchal differences between the men dressed in mainly black, but they all seemed to have one thing in common: they loved talking on their mobile phones before trying to work their way through the congested revolving door to get to the black limousines waiting outside. The religious leaders had come to Moscow together with a relic of the Virgin Mary from a monastery on Mount Athos in Greece that was making a tour of Russia. In Moscow, the Cincture of the Virgin Mary was on display in the Christ the Saviour Cathedral, the church that was demolished by Stalin in 1931 to be replaced by a swimming pool and resurrected in all its glory in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Tens of thousands of people waited in an immense queue to see the relic, braving the frosty cold and undeterred by waiting times of up to 24 hours. Food and hot drinks were handed out, and on the embankment next to the queue, buses with running engines provided some warmth.

The Tal Memorial took place in another Moscow landmark, the Pashkov House, well-known to lovers of Russian literature and Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* in particular. At the start of Chapter 29 of this favourite of many chess players, Woland and Azazello find themselves 'high over the city, on the stone terrace of one of the most beautiful houses in Moscow'. Originally built as a palace, the Pashkov House later became Moscow's first public library, and these days it houses the manuscript collection of the State Library, which includes those of Bulgakov.

The great white hall in which the games were played was reminiscent of the venue of the previous Tal Memorials in the GUM department store. The chandeliers and balconies were similar, only the ceiling seemed even higher this time. There were no endless queues in the courtyard of the Pashkov House, but on most days the playing hall was well filled. Around 30,000 visitors followed the games on the splendid website that not only provided live coverage of the games but also HD video coverage (read more about this superb video coverage in Macauley Peterson's contribution to this report). This number would undoubtedly have even been higher if the commentary had been in English as well as in Russian. Now many non-Russian fans followed the games on other news sites and online chess clubs.

The worldwide interest was understandable. With four 2800 players and none of the participants rated under 2700 it was tempting to call the tournament the strongest in history. As some people predictably did. Levon Aronian pointed out that such an epithet cannot be based on statistics only. 'The list of players alone is not enough to have the best tournament. It's more important how they performed. How many good games were played? If everybody had played their best, this would have been a very good tournament. But see, Anand wasn't playing his best, he was saving energy. I think it was a very solid tournament, very interesting. Some amateurs might say that there were too many draws, but in fact plenty of the games were very combative. I think it was one of the most exciting tournaments I have ever played in.'

Vishy Anand's lacklustre performance certainly didn't go unnoticed. At the prize-giving, chief arbiter Faik Gasanov provided some factual information. The total number of games won, the players with the highest number of decisive games and other trivia. When he mentioned that 'one player had drawn all his nine games' everyone laughed and turned to look at the World Champion. This might have been taken as lack of respect, but in fact it was a further sign of the excellent atmosphere at the Tal Memorial. Everyone got along fine, and even during the rounds the atmosphere was sometimes lighthearted. An explanation offered by various observers was the leniency of this year's arbiters. While in previous years chief arbiter Geurt Gijssen would urge the players not to talk during the games and often shushed them, Gasanov and his assistant Anatoly Bykhovsky didn't mind the players talking at all. Initially, this leniency seemed puzzling, but if you think about it, you realize that such conversations could do very little damage in an individual competition. In any case, the players' room backstage was one of the most cheerful places in the building, and it was a pity that there were no cameras there. A typical scene was two players seeing Sergey Karjakin come in and telling him to go away again, as they were discussing

ALEXANDER MOTYLEV

Part of the view from the roof terrace that Woland and Azazello enjoyed at the start of Chapter 29 of *The Master and Margarita*.

his game. To which Karjakin quipped: 'But I don't speak English!'

Anand's own explanation for his disappointing performance was understandably different. The World Champion was critical of his play, but he denied that he had not tried. 'Sometimes you play well and sometimes you don't get started. My preparation was often incomplete. I got surprised at the board, and somehow I wasn't fully settled in. I started to feel better at around the seventh or eighth round, but by then the tournament was over. I would say: somewhat sloppy preparation, and maybe the fact that I wasn't mentally there. But somehow it's too convenient to dump everything on the World Championship match. I am quite disappointed with the way I played.'

> 'The players' room backstage was one of the most cheerful places in the building, and it was a pity that there were no cameras there.'

The high number of draws was frustrating, given the energy with which most games were fought. Part of the explanation might be that the participants were so well matched that caution, as reflected in the frequent use of the Queen's Gambit Declined, was the order of the day. Carlsen pointed out a further reason: 'Many players were playing well here. For example, Kramnik, in all fairness, played two dreadful games, but otherwise he played some very decent chess and had winning chances in many games. I think that the main characteristic here was that people didn't crack. The tenacity in defence was just enormous. Even at this Elo level people don't usually defend this well. Take Gelfand, for example. He started off badly with two losses in his first three games, but after that he fought like a lion.'

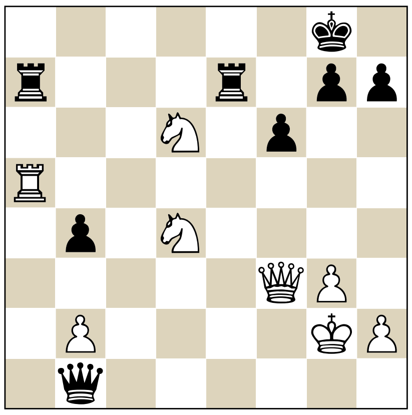
The tournament almost seemed to come to a standstill in rounds 4 to 6, when despite good intentions all around all games were drawn. In Round 7, the only decisive game was Ivanchuk's win against Nakamura, who showed his vulnerability by losing his second game as White. In Round 8, Aronian scored the only win. His opponent, Peter Svidler, had missed good chances in the previous two rounds against Carlsen and Nepomniachtchi, and was almost waiting for disaster to strike. With this win Aronian entered the final round half a point ahead of the foursome Carlsen, Karjakin, Nepomniachtchi and Ivanchuk. All five of them could still win, but as Ilya Levitov explained at the prize-giving, chess strongly resembles football these days. Echoing the words of Gary Lineker, who famously described football as a game for two teams of 11 players who play two halves of 45 minutes 'and in the end Germany wins', the Managing Director of the Russian Chess Federation noted that in today's chess no matter how the tournament goes, in the end Magnus Carlsen wins.

Centrally positioned at the front of the stage was one of the two games that no longer featured in the fight for first place. When the pairings were published at the start of the Tal Memorial, Anand-Gelfand looked like an intriguing last-round confrontation, but by now it attracted little attention.

Boris Gelfand was moderately satisfied with his performance. 'I enjoyed playing here. It was fantastic, an incredible place. I tried to play creatively. Some games lacked precision, sometimes luck was not on my side. Most games had very solid openings, so it was not so easy to get somewhere. My game against Carlsen was very interesting, but maybe I overestimated my chances. I had to settle for a draw. But I was so excited; it was a beautiful game. In fact, both games that I lost were very interesting. Karjakin played an incredibly technical game, unbelievably good.' Gelfand generally praised the quality of the games and spoke critically about the faster time-control used in Bilbao, where as a result there were few games he deemed worthy of looking at. Here the harvest was rich, and he urged chess fans not to just look at the result. A traditionalist by nature, he condemned the excessive use of engines by spectators. 'On some sites I read that Kramnik-Carlsen was of low quality. I think it's a lack of respect for the players. It doesn't matter what the computer says; it's one of the most fantastic games I have seen in years. If you watch such a game, why would you care what the computer says? If you watch it, you should watch it with other players and try to find moves, like it was before. Now on many sites you watch together with the computer and the pleasure is gone.'

In the other game that no longer mattered for the top results, Svidler-Kramnik, sparks were flying. Kramnik was loath to leave the tournament without a single win, but his aggression backfired and Svidler won a good game. Kramnik was visibly upset by his bad result and immediately rushed back to the hotel. He generally complained of tiredness in the fourth hour and the mistakes that resulted from this lack of energy. His friend Svidler was glad that he had finished the tournament on a positive note. Apprehensive after his poor showing at the European Teams, he was happy that he had played some fine games and provided a good deal of entertainment. 'Apart from a couple of black-outs, which are kind of normal for me these days, I played well. I should have been more in the running for the prizes, but considering I am here after three-and-a-half months of non-stop high-level chess, I can't complain. I know how exhausted I am and I am not going to complain about 50 per cent.' About his two wins he had the following to say: 'I think that Hikaru will justifiably be unhappy about his play against me, but I think I played an exemplary Grünfeld against him – lots of typical ideas, good execution, very nice game. And today is obviously memorable, because I don't beat this guy very often.'

And it's certainly rare that you get a chance to deal a player like Kramnik a coup de grâce like this one.



Svidler-Kramnik
position after 40...♖axa7

41.♕a8+!
Black resigned.

When former compatriots Karjakin and Ivanchuk clashed, both players were still in with a chance to move up to first place. As in most recent events, Ivanchuk stunned each and everyone with the diversity of his openings

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MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

Sergey Karjakin meets Sergey Karjakin. The famous Russian pentathlon champion dropped by to exchange gifts with his namesake, a foil for a chess set.

and his total dedication to the game. In this final game, too, there could be no doubt about his intentions. And he did get excellent chances, but Karjakin defended accurately to keep the score even. All in all, the Russian youngster was satisfied with his result. 'I play to win any tournament, but here I was very tired, because I had played too many tournaments and I had just come back from the European Team Championship. I tried to do my best, and I think I played some fine games. I was trying to play like Tal. For example, today I sacrificed three pawns and I should have made a draw, but instead I got a completely lost position. But then I got lucky and escaped. Against Magnus I also had a good position, but then I sacrificed a pawn and I was much worse again. But somehow I managed to scrape a draw.'

The only player who didn't depend on anyone else was Levon Aronian – if he won, that is. As it was, he ended up in a highly precarious position against Ian Nepomniachtchi. The young Russian was allowed to sacrifice an exchange for lucrative attacking chances. In fact, Aronian's first fears were that he was dead lost. On closer inspection, things were less dramatic, and with accurate play the Armenian managed to restore the balance. The game flared up again when Aronian committed a couple of inaccuracies and was suddenly fighting with his back against the wall again. For 85 long moves he had to sweat before he could claim the desired half point.

For Ian Nepomniachtchi the draw was a bitter pill to swallow, as a win against Aronian would have handed him the tournament. But Nepomniachtchi chose not to look at it that way. He preferred an objective analysis, which also included a couple of games he might have lost. Indeed, merely looking at his results, a win in the first round against Kramnik followed by eight draws, it is hard to imagine how much was happening on all those days that he kept adding half points to his sum-total. His result was also a further sign of his growing maturity. The unpredictable and volatile youth continues to gain stability and experience. 'When I was 12 or 13 years old, I really wasted a lot of time instead of improving my chess. I was happy to win junior tournaments. I wasn't serious enough, I was not studying chess at all. Meanwhile, Magnus was playing in GM tournaments. I just thought that my time to play strong tournaments would also come. But of course if you can do something earlier, you should do it earlier, and not wait till you're 20. Until the Russian Higher League in 2009 I didn't really care about my results. If I won, great, if I lost, no big deal. In some tournaments I played so badly that I couldn't even castle in most of my games. And I told myself I should stop this idiotic chess and try to do something really clever. From that point onward, I tried to play more seriously. To spend more energy on each game and be more serious overall. It was an important moment when I decided to stop playing like an amateur. I have been working with Vladimir Potkin since the end of 2007, but it is not about working with someone, but about being more serious yourself.'

For Levon Aronian the draw meant a shared first place, but not the winner's cup, as the tie-break declared Carlsen, who had already finished his game, the winner. The Norwegian had played more games as Black. One might even say that the first-round draw between the two top-finishers had decided the tournament, because in that game Carlsen had been Black. Nevertheless Aronian's personal perception was that they shared first place, which you couldn't really blame him for. He and Carlsen had shown the most inspired chess and made the biggest contribution to the success of this Tal Memorial. 'It doesn't matter at all. We scored the same number of points. Sometimes I won tournaments because of the tiebreak, but I don't think it matters to anybody.'

Arriving from Greece, where Armenia didn't live up to expectations, he had had his doubts. 'I didn't think I would play well, I was really tired. You know, I guess it's the same in every sport, when you win you don't really get tired, you get more energy, but when your team is not getting the desired result, you're upset.' His mood changed after he had beaten Ivanchuk in a model game that he was rightfully proud of. 'I guess that like most good players, I have this urge to win. So when our team didn't win, I was really focused. And I am happy that I was not saving energy or anything. I was just going and playing. I wasn't playing really well, making many blunders, but I was trying.'

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Magnus Carlsen didn't mind Aronian calling the final result a shared win, but pointing at the rules he shrugged and said that he felt that he had won the tournament. Although he modified his words by noting: 'If I had been on plus-2 instead of on plus-1 after, let's say, six rounds, that would have made all the difference. Now I feel that rather than playing a good tournament and winning deservedly, I just drew the right number.'

His final task, beating Nakamura with black, was a tough one, if only for the enormous amount of energy he had already spent in the previous rounds, wading in to fight to the death in each and every game. His gripping and unorthodox fights against Kramnik and Gelfand were particularly impressive. 'Those were not really my typical games, but I enjoyed them a lot. It's thrilling, it's fun to live on the edge. For a couple of rounds I felt that I could walk on water. Against Kramnik my position was suspect, to say the least, but so far no one has been able to show me anything convincing. I wasn't playing bishop e6, bishop d7 and knight b8 for fun. I just thought that these were the best moves, and the thing is that although I was hopelessly passive and undeveloped, my position was fundamentally sound. That's the thing. If your position is sound, sometimes you can allow yourself to play really ugly moves, because it's not going to break down by itself.'

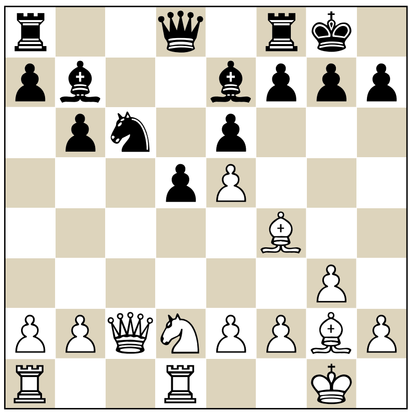
Still, all these unusual adventures took their toll, and at the start of the last round he felt really drained.

'At some point I could no longer do it, and today I had no idea how I was going to play for a win. You know, the problem is also that it's extremely hard to find new energy here in Moscow. The city drains energy from you rather than giving it to you. That's why it's difficult. You could see from the games today that people were just worn out.'

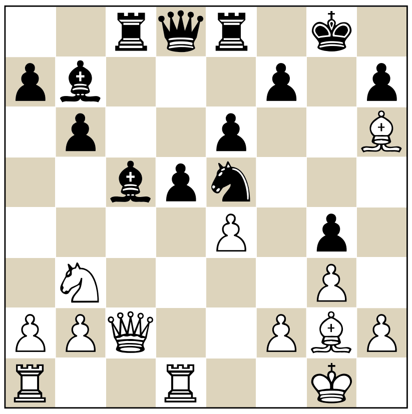
The idea of how to play for a win hit him when Nakamura allowed him to snatch a pawn.

QI 14.7 – E15
Hikaru Nakamura
Magnus Carlsen
Moscow 2011 (9)

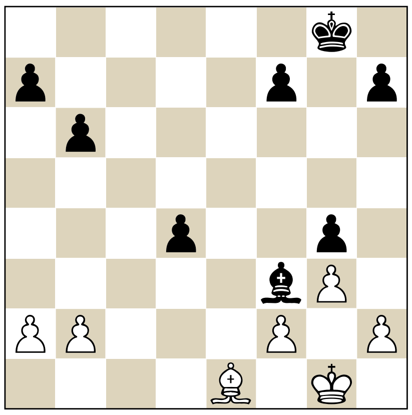
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗a6 5.♕c2 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♗e7 7.♗g2 c6 8.0-0 d5 9.♘e5 ♘fd7 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♗f4 ♘xe5 12.dxe5 0-0 13.♖d1 ♗b7 14.♘d2 ♘c6



15.♘f3 This loses a pawn. Safer was 15.h4, although Carlsen felt that Black would still be fine. He wasn't quite sure if White's move was a blunder, but commented that he wouldn't have been able to live with himself if he hadn't taken the pawn. **15...g5 16.♗e3 g4 17.♘d4 ♘xe5 18.♗h6 ♖e8 19.e4 ♗c5** If White's pawn sac was intentional, it wasn't a big success, as it condemned him to a fight for equality. **20.♘b3 ♖c8**



21.♘xc5 This only compounds White's problems. He would have had good drawing chances after 21.exd5 ♗xd5 22.♗xd5 exd5 23.♕f5 ♖c6 24.♗f4 ♖f6 25.♕g5+ ♖g6 26.♕xd8 ♘f3+ 27.♔g2 ♖xd8. **21...♖xc5 22.♕a4 ♗c6 23.♕d4 ♕f6 24.♗f4 dxe4 25.♗xe4 ♘f3+ 26.♗xf3 ♕xd4 27.♖xd4 ♗xf3 28.♖d7 ♖d5 29.♖xd5 exd5 30.♗e3 ♖e4 31.♖e1 d4 32.♗d2 ♖xe1+ 33.♗xe1**



It's an opposite-coloured bishop end-

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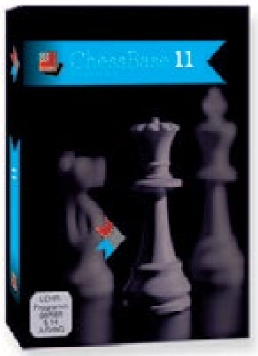

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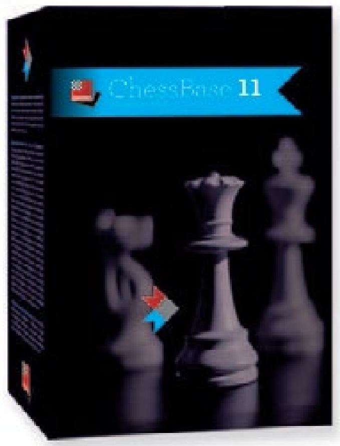

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ing, but this time Black's extra pawn makes the difference. **33...♗e2 34.f4 gxf3 35.♗f2 d3 36.♗e1 ♔g7 37.♔f2 ♔f6 38.♔e3 ♔f5 39.h3 h5 40.♗d2 ♗f1 41.♗e1 ♗xh3 42.♔xd3 ♗f1+ 43.♔e3 ♔g4 44.♔f2 ♗b5 45.♗c3 ♗c6 46.♗e5 b5 47.♗b8 a6 48.♗c7 f5 49.b3 ♗d5 50.♗d6 f4 51.gxf4 h4 52.f5 ♔xf5 53.♔e3 ♔g4 54.♔f2 h3 55.♔e3 ♗e4 56.♔f2 ♗b1 57.a3 ♗a2 58.b4 ♗f7** White resigned.

The win was greeted with a broad smile and wiped away the brief bout of uncertainty Carlsen had had only one day earlier. 'I was thinking yesterday that in general it was a very exciting tournament. It was like an interesting story, but it felt like it was going to have the wrong ending. That's why it felt weird, something was not right. That I was on the verge of not winning this tournament. That's just wrong. This was not how it was supposed to be. I was not satisfied before the last round. Now I am obviously satisfied, not a hundred per cent, there are always things that can be improved, but I am pretty happy.'

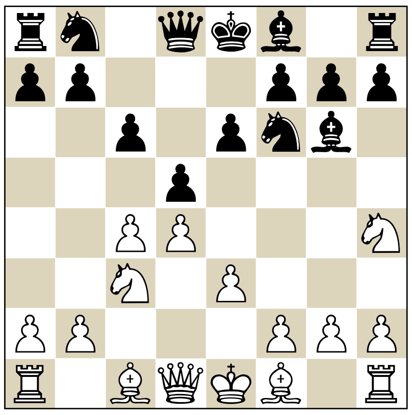
Part of the last game I followed in the press room, together with Mark Dvoretsky, who talked admiringly about Carlsen's lack of fear of losing and praised his unwavering will to win. When I relay his praise to Carlsen, he says wide-eyed, as if he doesn't even want to think about failing to win a tournament: 'Not winning a tournament is not an option for me, unless it's no longer theoretically possible. Then of course winning becomes impossible. But up to that point, not winning is just not an option.'

The next day I have a chat on Skype with Garry Kasparov, who was in Moscow during the Tal Memorial but didn't visit the Pashkov House. His verdict is unambiguous: 'It is clear that Carlsen is now the best player in the world. There is no question about that. The match everyone would like to see now is one between Magnus and Aronian.'

NOTES BY
Magnus Carlsen

SL 1.7 – D12
Magnus Carlsen
Boris Gelfand
Moscow 2011 (2)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 No QGD today. **3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 ♗f5 5.♘c3 e6 6.♘h4 ♗g6**

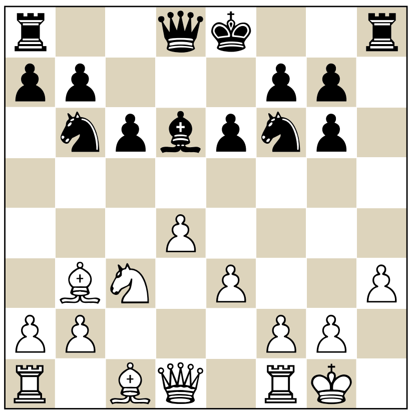


But admittedly, this line is pretty solid, too.

7.♘xg6 hxg6 8.♗d3 ♘bd7 9.0-0 ♗d6 10.h3

All very logical, but seldom played. Probably because most sensible people don't want to get under the kind of onslaught that happened in the game.

10...dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♘b6 12.♗b3



I thought about this one for a while. Just a waste of time really, as I realized pretty early on that I wanted to put my bishop on b3 here, and that I most likely was not going to change my mind.

12...e5 13.♕c2

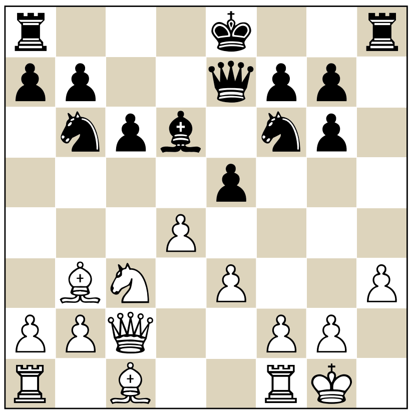
Now Black will not be able to castle kingside, and he's more or less forced to either castle queenside and play for an attack, or put his king on f8, and accept a passive position.

13.dxe5 ♗xe5 14.♕f3 is a more solid option: 14...0-0 15.♖d1 ♕e7 16.♗d2, with a more or less typical position in which White has the bishop pair, which would be enough for some people to claim a slight advantage.

13.♕f3 is no good due to 13...♕e7, with ...e4 to come.

13...♕e7

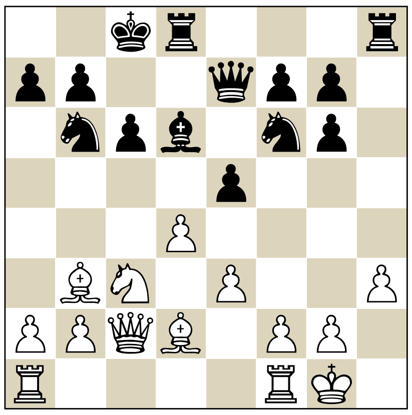
13...exd4 14.exd4 ♗c7 15.♗g5! ♔f8 (15...♕d6 16.f4 ♕xd4+ 17.♖f2 looks promising for White) 16.♕d3 ♕d6 17.f4 ♘bd5 18.♖ae1, and White must be better.



14.♗d2 Not an impressive move by any means, but it was not easy to find something more useful here.

14.f4 exd4 15.exd4 0-0-0 16.f5 ♗c7 17.fxg6 fxg6 18.♕xg6 ♖xd4 did not impress me at all; now White will have to bail out with 19.♕f7 ♕xf7 (19...♕e5 20.♕e6+) 20.♗xf7 and hope for equality.

14...0-0-0!



15.d5 To me, this seemed like the only logical move.

15.♘b5 ♗b8 16.a4 is too difficult.

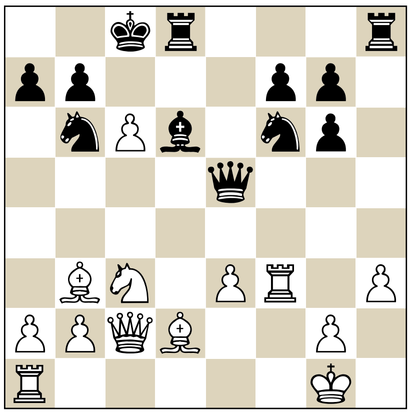
15...e4 Clearly the only decent move.

15...c5 16.e4 is positional capitulation.

16.dxc6 ♕e5

16...♖xh3 17.gxh3 ♕e5 18.f4 exf3 19.♖xf3 ♕h2+ 20.♔f1 does not by any means lead to mate.

17.f4 exf3 18.♖xf3

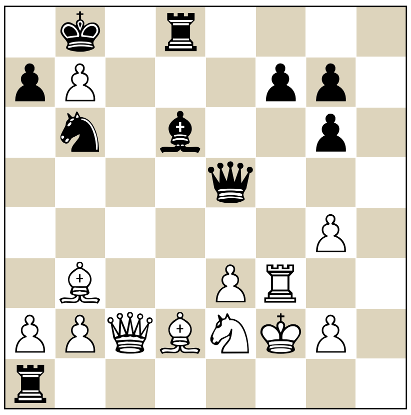


18...♘g4

I had missed this elegant little move when I played 14.♗d2.

18...♕h2+ 19.♔f2 ♗b4 is what I was considering at first. One amusing continuation would be 20.♗xf7 (20.♗e1 ♖he8 21.♖xf6 gxf6 22.♗xf7 ♖e5 23.♗xg6 ♗c5 is unclear) 20...♖xd2+ 21.♕xd2 ♗xc3! (I had only looked at 21...♘e4+ 22.♘xe4 ♗xd2 23.cxb7+ ♔b8 24.♘xd2 ♕d6 25.♘c4 ♘xc4 26.♗xc4, and White can play for a win without any risk) 22.♕d3 ♖d8! 23.cxb7+ ♔xb7 24.♕xd8 ♘e4+ 25.♔e2 ♕xg2+ 26.♔d3 ♘c5+ 27.♔xc3 ♘ba4+ 28.♔b4 ♕xb2+ 29.♗b3 ♕c3+ 30.♔a3 ♕b2+, with a draw by perpetual check.

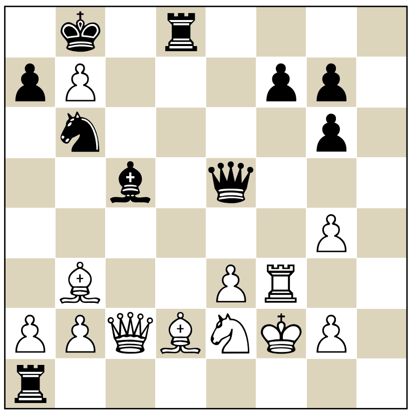
19.cxb7+ ♔b8 20.hxg4 ♖h1+ 21.♔f2 ♖xa1 22.♘e2



I was pretty sure that I did not have an advantage here, objectively speaking, but I was fascinated by the unusual nature of the position, so I was still pretty excited.

22...♗c5

Clearly the most natural move. 22...♖d7 was also possible, with the point that the tempting 23.♘d4 is met solidly by 23...♕h2.



23.♗c3

I thought for a long time here, trying to figure out how to arrange my pieces. Actually, I considered just about every move: both captures on f7, ♘d4 and even ♗c1, shutting out the rook on a1.

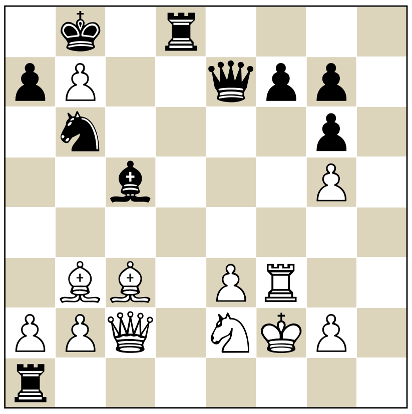
23.♖xf7 ♖xd2 24.♕xd2 ♗xe3+ 25.♕xe3 ♖f1+ 26.♔xf1 ♕xe3 should be a draw, the white king is too exposed.

After 23.♘d4, 23...♖xd4 is more or less forced (23...♗xd4 24.exd4 ♕xd4+ 25.♗e3 ♕b4 26.♖xf7 ♕e1+ 27.♔f3 ♕f1+ 28.♔e4! ♖e8+ 29.♔d4 ♖d1+ 30.♕xd1 ♕xf7! 31.♗xf7 ♖d8+ 32.♔c5 ♖xd1 33.♔c6, and White is winning): 24.exd4 ♗xd4+ 25.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 26.♖xe3 ♕f4+ 27.♖f3 ♕d4+ 28.♖e3. I saw thus far, but I didn't want to settle for a draw like this.

23.♗xf7 ♕e7, and here I just could not find a decent move for White.

23...♕e7 24.g5!

The point of my previous move.



24...♖dd1

If 24...♕xg5 25.♕e4 White is perfectly centralized. Here I looked at 25...f5 26.♕f4+! ♕xf4 27.♘xf4 ♔xb7 28.♘e6 ♖c8 29.♖g3, and even though Black is currently a full exchange up, it is clear that only White can play for a win.

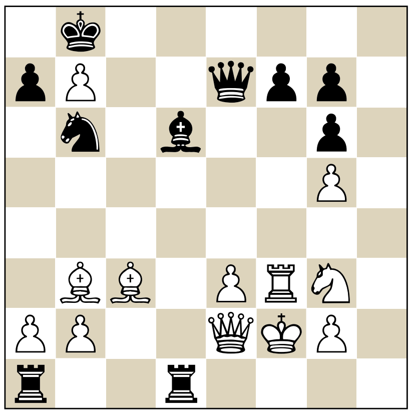
24...♖d7 was once again interesting: 25.♗xf7 (25.♗xg7 ♕xg5 26.♕e4 f5 is no good, since there is no ♕f4 due to the fact that the bishop is hanging) 25...♗xe3+ 26.♖xe3 ♕xf7+ 27.♖f3 ♕e7 28.♕xg6 ♘a4!, and Black is doing quite well, according to the comp.

25.♘g3 The only move.

25...♗d6 26.♕e2

Once again, the only move, but I spent some time around here just to make sure that I was not walking into something really embarrassing.

26.♘e4 would have been an excellent move, were it not for 26...♖ac1 27.♕e2 ♖f1+ and Black wins.



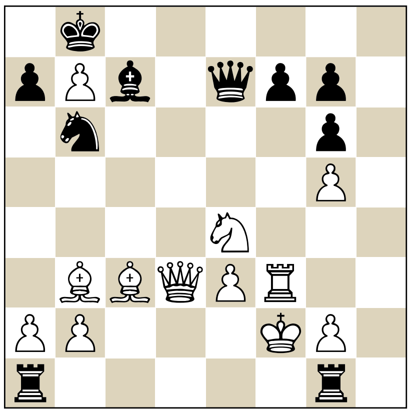
26...♖g1? This is too optimistic. Gelfand should have been content with 26...♗xg3+ 27.♖xg3 ♖f1+ 28.♕xf1 ♖xf1+ 29.♔xf1 ♘d7! and now, with the knight coming to e5 or c5, Black should be OK: 30.♗xg7 (30.♖f3 ♘e5 31.♗d5 ♘xf3 32.♗xf3 ♕xe3 33.♗xg7 ♕xg5 keeps the b7 pawn, but is most probably playing for a loss rather than a win) 30...♘c5 31.♗c2 ♘e4 32.♗xe4 ♕xe4 33.a3, with equality.

27.♕d3? Very logical, preparing ♘e4, but much stronger was 27.♕b5. I rejected this move mainly because I could not see what my next move would be. However, looking at the position once more, it seems even harder to find a move for Black.

27...♗c7 28.♘e4

NEW IN CHESS

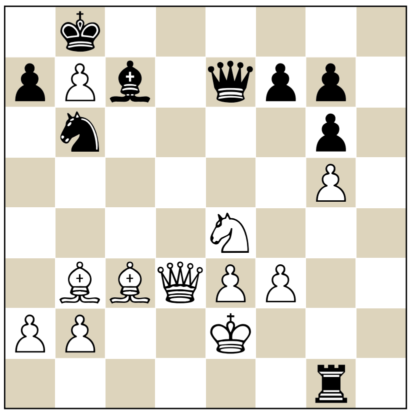
With amused smiles Levon Aronian, Ian Nepomniachtchi and Magnus Carlsen turn to look at Vishy Anand as arbiter Faik Gasanov mentions that ‘one player drew all nine games’.



28...♖af1+?! Gelfand, who was in slight time-trouble, wanted to clarify the situation a bit, but exchanging rooks does not help Black.

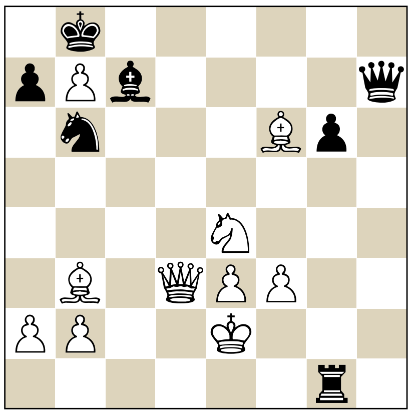
29.♔e2 ♖xf3 30.gxf3

With two very powerful bishops and a strong knight on e4, White is really controlling a lot of squares now.



30...f5 30...♗e5 31.♗xf7! ♗xc3 32.bxc3 keeps an edge for White, as the bishop obviously cannot be captured. 30...♖g2+ 31.♔f1 (31.♔d1 ♖g1+ 32.♔c2 ♖g2+, and White is getting nowhere) 31...♖h2 was a very logical option, as the white king is now stuck on the first rank: 32.f4 f5 (32...♕f8 33.♘f2 ♕h8 34.♗xf7 ♕h4 35.♗e1 is a much more comfortable version for White) 33.gxf6 gxf6 34.♗xf6 (34.♘xf6 ♖h3 with ...♖xe3 or ...♗xf4 to come) 34...♕h7 35.♘f2 ♘d7 36.♗d4 ♕h4, and Black obtains counterplay, which White can nevertheless contain with a few precise moves: 37.♕e2 ♕g3 38.♗d5 ♘b6 39.♗c6 ♘c4 40.b3 ♘a5 41.♗d5 ♘xb7 42.♕f3 ♕xf3 43.♗xf3, and White should have some winning chances.

31.gxf6 gxf6 32.♗xf6 ♕h7



33.♕b5! By now, I had got quite used to playing with an exposed king, so making the decision to make room for the king on d3 was an easy one.

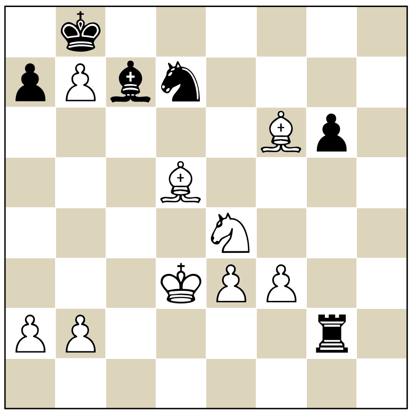
33...♖g2+? 33...♘d7 34.♗d4 ♕h3 35.♔d2! ♕g2+ 36.♔c3 ♖c1+ 37.♔b4, and White is comfortably running away.

33...a6, with the idea of 34.♕xa6 ♕h1, with counterplay, was probably Black’s best chance: 34.♕e8+ ♔xb7 35.♘c5+ ♔a7 36.♕c6 ♕h2+ 37.♔d3 ♕d6+ 38.♕xd6 ♗xd6, and Black fights on in a difficult endgame.

34.♔d3 ♕d7+

34...♘d7 35.♗e6! wins on the spot.

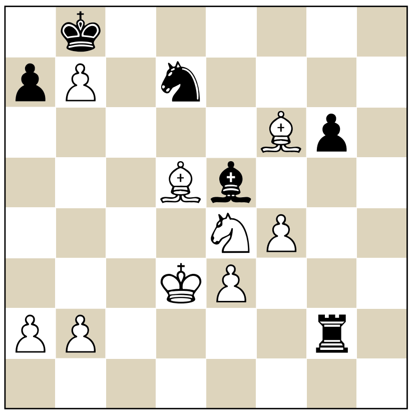
35.♕xd7 ♘xd7 36.♗d5



Surprisingly, the ‘doomed’ pawn on b7 is now the decisive factor.

36...♗e5 36...♘xf6 37.♘xf6 a5 38.♘d7+ ♔a7 39.e4 ♖xb2 40.e5, and White should win without any trouble.

37.f4 37.♗xe5+ ♘xe5+ 38.♔d4! ♘d7 39.♗c6 ♖g1 40.♘f2, and White should win easily.



37...♗c7? A blunder, which lost Black the game immediately.

37...♗xf6 38.♘xf6 ♘c5+ 39.♔d4 ♖c2 would have enabled Black to fight on. I had seen this far, but thought that 40.b4 would win easily, as I simply did not realize that Black could capture on b7: 40.b4 ♘xb7 41.♘d7+ ♔c7 42.♘f8, and White keeps a huge edge. Whether it’s enough to win is not clear, though.

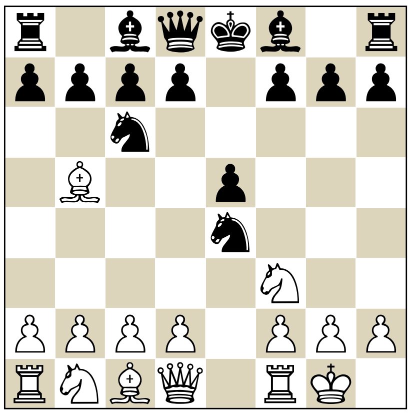
38.♗c6 And Boris resigned, as the white knight is inevitably going to reach either d7 or a6 via c5 or f6.

Certainly one of the most interesting games I have played in recent times!

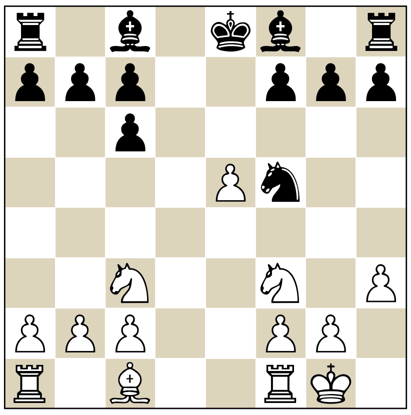
NOTES BY
Levon Aronian

RL 7.4 – C67
Vasily Ivanchuk
Levon Aronian
Moscow 2011 (3)

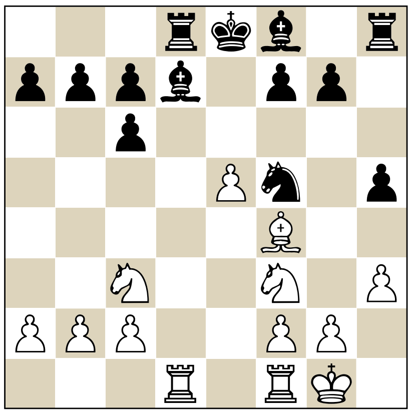
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6
In this game I decided to choose the Berlin Variation, since, despite Vasily's enormous chess experience, he has not played many games in the Berlin Variation and with black he employs it very rarely.
4.0-0 ♘xe4



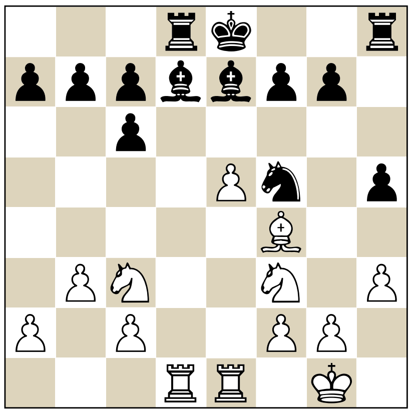
5.d4
In the Grand Slam tournament in Bilbao my opponent chose 5.♖e1. The move in the game is more critical.
5...♘d6 6.♗xc6
The rare Showalter-Pillsbury variation 6.♗a4 has never been especially popular, but when one looks at the position it seems the most logical.
6...dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 9.♘c3 ♔e8 10.h3



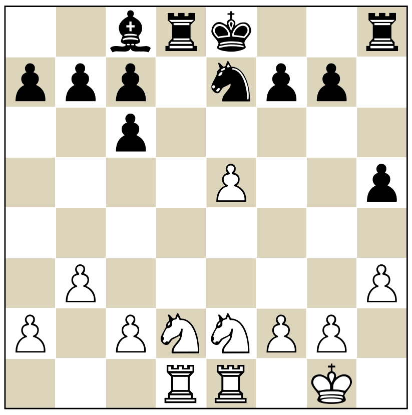
10...h5
I had not played this before. I prefer to move my f5 knight to various squares and then ask myself why I didn't leave it on f5. I was persuaded to play ...h5 by my second, Arman Pashikian, who is an advocate of direct and correct play.
11.♗f4
When the knight remains on f5, it does not make a lot of sense to develop the bishop on b2, since after the e6 advance the g7 pawn is defended.
11...♗d7
In this position this had not been played before. It is not a high-quality move, but since this idea had not been previously tested, Arman advised me to employ it.
The usual move in this position is 11...♗e7 followed by the development of the bishop at e6. Practice has shown that in this case Black has an acceptable game, although in the course of things he usually has to reconcile himself to the exchange of a white knight for one of his fine bishops. With the move in the game Black tries to achieve the exchange of one rook and at the same time retain the advantage of the bishop pair.
12.♖ad1 ♖d8



An interesting moment in the game. Black's main idea is ...♗c8.
13.b3
A logical move. White prepares to advance his pawn to c4, where it controls the important d5-square.
13...♗e7
One of the main plans in this variation is the undermining move ...f6. With the move in the game I have prepared ...♗c8, and in the event of the capture on d8 I will recapture with the bishop. In a situation where the c7 pawn is defended, ...f6 then suggests itself.
14.♖fe1
This move allows Black to exchange the dark-squared bishops under favourable circumstances.
More in the spirit of the preceding play would have been the waiting 14.g3, a move which, incidentally, is rather typical of this variation.



14...♗b4
14...♘h4 was also not bad, but I am too fond of the Berlin knight to try myself to exchange it when this is not demanded.
15.♗d2
15.♖d3 looks awkward. After 15...♗e6 Black has comfortable play.
15...♗c8 16.♘e2
The knight defends the d4-square and will aim in the future for f4.
16...♗xd2 17.♘xd2
The exchange of rooks is advantageous to Black. After 17.♖xd2 ♖xd2 18.♘xd2 ♔e7 followed by ...♖d8 he has an easy game.
17...♘e7 I decided to direct my knight to g6, force White to play f4, and after ...h4 obtain a standard blockading position.



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A glimps of the control room. With multiple camera views, live post-game segments with the players in the press room, and special guest appearances, the Tal Memorial organizers have come a long way from the first attempt last year.

Russian Chess Pulls Out all the Stops

Over the past year, viewers of major events held in Russia, including the Candidates' in Kazan and the World Cup, have been treated to top-class live video coverage. The World Cup even added commentary in English which attracted an audience of over a million viewers, according to the company that produced the show. For the Tal Memorial, **Macauley Peterson** stopped by Moscow for a 'behind the scenes' tour.

Producing a live commentary show for five hours straight is harder than it looks. There have been many attempts over the years, but no one has fully managed to get it right, to create an exciting program for a broad audience.

As a subject for live video broadcast, chess has obvious drawbacks. The drama is largely played out in the minds of the protagonists, and the 'action' at the board is quite limited, and visually repetitive. Classical chess creates the added problem of each game lasting as much as six hours. Sure, there are a few players who are notably expressive or animated in their demeanour (Nakamura and Kasparov come to mind), which can liven things up a bit, but the norm is for players to remain stoic and poker-faced at the board, which doesn't make the most thrilling viewing. If spectators don't understand the story behind the positions, they can quickly tune out.

The Russian Chess Federation has been tackling these challenges head on, throwing substantial resources behind a live commentary production not seen since the pre-Internet days when chess made the occasional foray onto broadcast television.

The basic concept is by no means new. The 1980s and 90s saw several examples of well-produced chess shows on TV, such as the Kasparov-Short 'Speed Chess Challenge' in 1987.

Pull it up on YouTube. Go on, I'll wait. The key elements are all there: A wide angle of the scene. Close-ups on each player. A view of the board and the clock. A graphical representation of the position, with commentary and analysis.

The Russians have taken this production into the 2010s, with high-definition video... lots of it. The latest incarnation in November was the most impressive yet. With multiple camera views, live post-game segments with the players in the press room, and special guest appearances, they have come a long way from the first attempt at last year's Tal Memorial.

How They Did It

The show's lead producer, Kira Taubert, headed up a team of four from her company Digicast, with the help of an additional ten freelance video professionals. The production crew wired up the elegant Pashkov House full of XLR, HDMI, BNC, CAT5 – and these are only the cables!

In the playing hall, the five boards were arrayed on stage in two rows – three downstage and two upstage. Three camera operators provided shots from the front and sides of the stage, while an unmanned camera in the balcony proffered an extra wide-angle overview. Two remote-controlled cameras at the front of the stage captured close-ups of the right and left boards, while a third robotic camera was suspended from a crane high above the players to provide aerial views. Together these nine cameras create an unprecedented variety of shot possibilities.

The crane shot was a nice innovation, enabling the audience to see details usually unavailable, such as close-ups of the players' score-sheets. Not even a live audience is ordinarily privy to these angles.

The goal, according to Taubert, was to provide more than just the players' faces, but a 'complete 360 degree view' of the action.

'Although it is impolite to go quite near to the players, we're using robots to bring the camera as close as possible to the players', she explained.

After a few games each day, one or both players was asked to tell the story of the game for the assembled chess journalists in the press room, which was also carried live on the online webcast.

The press room featured the most enormous plasma screen you've ever seen. No, really – it was the world's largest when it debuted in 2007 at 261 cm (103 inches). That's enough glass for four 127 cm (50 inch) flat screen TVs. This monstrosity was on loan directly from the Pashkov House, however, and not hauled in specifically for the Tal Memorial. And it was used to display only standard DGT output of the live boards. (Evidently my suggestion that we load up the new Star Wars release on Blu-ray after-hours was not taken seriously.)

One floor up, the makeshift control room was packed with smaller displays, computer workstations, control surfaces and, of course, more cameras. In addition to the technical equipment and production staff, this is where the commentators, lead by Emil Sutovsky, anchored the show, with two additional cameras providing sparingly-used medium and close-up shots.

'Commentators are the most important people here. All the rest of the staff follow what they are saying', Taubert explained.

This requires that the key staff have a decent amount of chess understanding. For instance, Evgeny Ivanov, the 'director of live' – as Taubert refers to him – makes the on-the-fly decisions regarding which video feed to show, choices which are constantly informed by the game being analysed. If Sutovsky switches over to the Carlsen game, the camera needs to quickly follow. Ivanov also supervised the operator of the remote crane-mounted camera, directing where it should point and when. And he cued the commentators in and out of 'commercial breaks', which consisted of pre-produced video from a few of the principal sponsors.

The team had a general plan for each round, and communicated with the commentators and each other via chat throughout the day. About eighty percent of the staff had worked together on a previous chess event.

> 'The main point of what we're doing now is to popularize chess for the people who play casually and do not know much about chess'

'The main point of what we're doing now is to popularize chess for the people who play casually and do not know much about chess', said Taubert. The productions initially targeted people who play actively and at a decent level, but more recently the target audience has expanded to weaker players. Sutovsky, a top grandmaster himself of course, can get carried away with deep analysis, but he was joined by a variety of guests including authors, athletes, and '64' magazine editor Mark Glukhovsky, who targeted weaker viewers and regaled the audience with amusing anecdotes and stories from past tournaments.

The audience could interact with each other and, to some extent, with the commentators via Twitter, which was integrated below the video player on

PHOTOS MACAULEY PETERSON

the Russian Chess Federation website. Another superb feature was the ability to switch between a high-definition stream, and one that is only standard definition, and therefore somewhat less taxing on a viewer's internet connection. The presentation also looked great on mobile devices like the iPad.

Shortcomings

The scope of the video is unmatched in both quantity and quality, but there is still room for improvement. Taubert would like to see more pre-produced material, that could be scheduled into the program. Aside from the some segments reviewing the previous day's highlights, there was little to fill in the inevitable dull moments in a five hour broadcast.

I share that sentiment from my own practice at the U.S. Championship, where we tended to have a new featurette to use on the live show each day, but it was never enough.

The presentation of the chess analysis, which is arguably as important as the live video, seems like a bit of an afterthought in the configuration used in Moscow, and key details like the clock times were routinely imprecise.

The coordination with the press room was also spotty – at least during the early rounds that I attended – and the post-game chats were run rather haphazardly.

I would also like to see more audience-participation, to leverage the major advantage the Internet has over television – easy interactivity.

The biggest liability for the international audience, of course, was the lack of an English-language show, and Taubert observed herself how the World Cup's viewership, for which they provided an English option, was many times larger than the Russian-only productions could muster.

During the first few rounds, the show was receiving around 10,000 simultaneous viewers, a number which would rise considerably over the course of the event, buoyed by press reports and word-of-mouth. This brings me to the $64,000 question. How much does this all cost?

Sparing No Expense

To stream a five hour program to thousands of people for nine days using a commercial streaming service provider costs many thousands of dollars *for the bandwidth alone*.

Digicast gets around that in part by using all their own equipment and servers, and working with freelancers. Still, with over a dozen staff, and a truckload's worth of high-end video equipment, the production must cost a small fortune. I was told that the precise figures are withheld subject to the terms of the contract with the Russian Chess Federation, but I would estimate the *answer* to be far more than $64,000 – perhaps $70,000-100,000 – approaching the level of the prize fund. A representative from the RCF would only say it was 'expensive and painful'. (By contrast, the U.S. Championship live stream and the London Chess Classic are produced for less than one tenth of that cost.)

As an online-only enterprise, it's still a far cry from a comparable production for television. And with a high-quality product, upwards of a million unique viewers, and commercial sponsorship, the online webcast is certainly resembling TV more and more.

If bowling, hotdog eating, and even rock-paper-scissors can get on ESPN, why not? ■

18.♘c4

An interesting move. The knight at c4 stands quite well, in some cases threatening the queenside pawns by ♘a5. The remote position of the knight allows Black to consider a possible expansion on the kingside by ...g5, but this idea did not greatly appeal to me, since in this case the play becomes tactical. Why seek adventures when you have a sound position?

18...♘d5

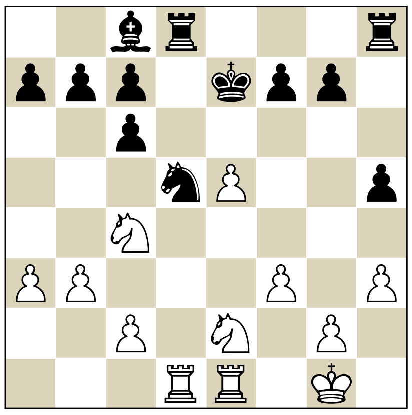
With this move I decided to initiate a complicated and positional battle. A good alternative was 18...h4, with the idea of continuing my initial plan, but I was contemplating more.

19.a3

Just in case preventing any tactical ideas for Black involving the leap of his knight to b4.

19...♔e7 20.f3

Logically White tries to bring his king towards the centre, but possibly the manoeuvre of his c4 knight to d3 via b2 was more appropriate.



20...h4

The main idea of 18...♘d5 was to retain both pairs of rooks. Now Black's plan is to try and place one rook on h5, the other on e8 and the king on f8, with the further idea of driving the knight from c4 and winning the e5 pawn.

21.♔f2 ♖h5 22.♖d2

An excessively modest move. White should have considered the idea of playing 22.b4 and after ♖d4 of exchanging the strong d5 knight by ♘f4.

22...♖e8 23.♘d4

Despite the fact that White's position

NEW IN CHESS

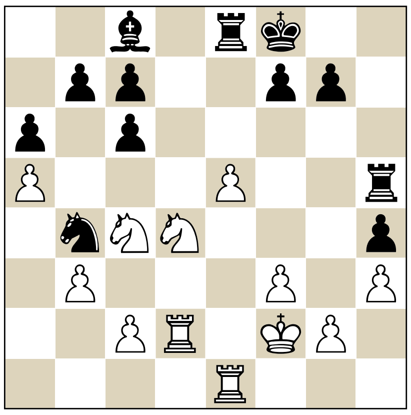
Levon Aronian had every reason to see his shared first place as shared victory. The Armenian played great chess. His win against Ivanchuk was a strategic masterpiece.

is very solid and for the moment Black has no possible grounds for playing for a win, the psychological advantage was on my side. Black's plan is more or less clear, whereas for the moment it is uncertain what White should do.

23...♔f8 24.a4

The pawn on a5 will forever prevent Black's attempt to activate his bishop by ...b6.

24...a6 25.a5 ♘b4



In view of the fact that the pawn on a5 may simultaneously prove to be a weakness, I decided to threaten to play my knight to c6.

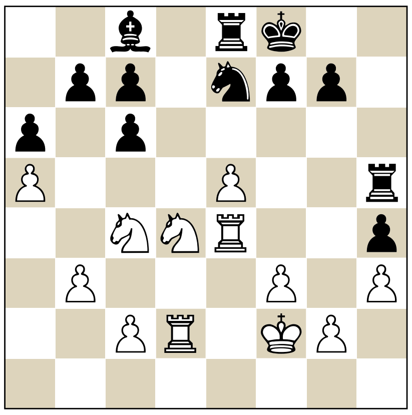
26.♘e2 ♘d5

Of course, it would be stupid to allow the knight to go to f4.

27.♘d4 ♘e7

I realized that without provoking f4 I would not be able to achieve anything.

28.♖e4



A good move. Now the idea of ...♘g6 loses its point, since the e5 pawn will never be hanging in view of the pin ♖de2 after ...♘xe5.

28...♖h6

Since the rook comes under attack by the knight from f4, I decided temporarily to retreat it. At the same time Black is threatening to play ...c5.

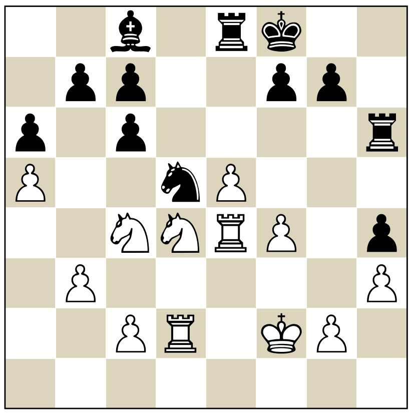
29.f4

Although visually this advance seems premature, it is hard to suggest another move.

29.e6 was risky, since after 29...f6 the pawn might gradually become weak and be lost.

Another idea, such as 29.♘e3, also leads to a strategically dangerous position for White after 29...c5 30.♘e2 ♘c6 31.♖d5 b6.

29...♘d5



30.♔f3

This move is the initial cause of White's difficulties.

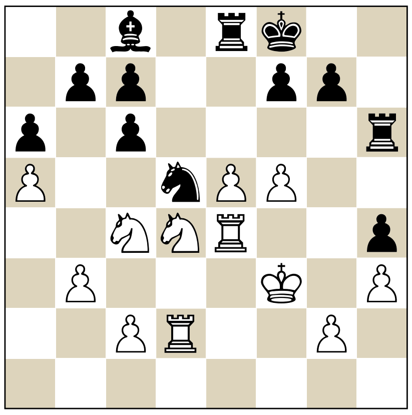
After 30.♘f3 the position would have remained roughly equal. Possibly Vasily did not take account of the following manoeuvre.

30...♖g6 31.f5

After 31.♘e2 ♗f5 32.♖ed4 f6 White has an unpleasant position.

31...♖h6

Now the incautious f-pawn falls victim to the hungry bishop on c8.



32.♖e1

A mistake. After 32.♔f2 c5 33.♘f3 ♗xf5 34.♖xh4 ♖xh4 35.♘xh4 ♗e6 White is slightly worse, but there is still everything to play for.

32...c5

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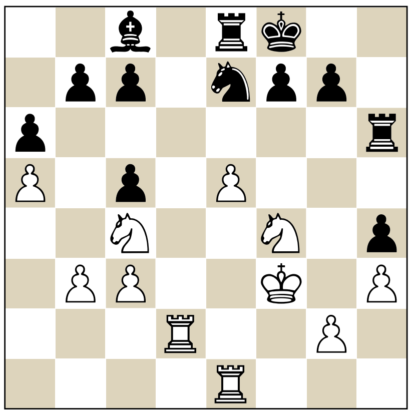
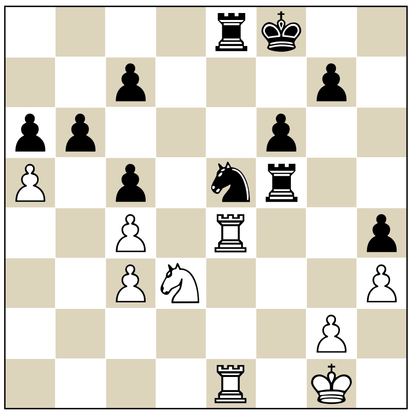
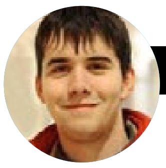
32...♖h5 was more competent, winning the pawn with every comfort.
33.♘e2 ♘e7 34.♘f4
34.f6 gxf6 35.♘f4 was more resilient, but at this moment my opponent's shortage of time became a more important factor than his bad position.
34...♘xf5 35.c3 ♘e7



Black's position is so won, that even my ability to turn won games into a draw was unable to change the course of the game.
36.♖ed1 ♘g6
The further moves are not of great importance, since Black has many alternative ways to his goal.
37.♘d3 ♗e6 38.♖e1 ♖h5 39.♔f2 ♖f5+ 40.♔g1 ♗xc4 41.bxc4 ♘xe5 42.♖de2 f6 43.♖e4 b6



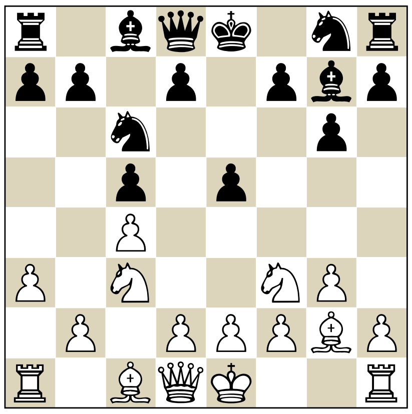
44.axb6
This exchange eases Black's task, which in any case was not so difficult.
44...cxb6 45.♖xh4 ♘g6 46.♖he4 ♖xe4 47.♖xe4 ♔f7 48.♖e2 ♘e5 49.g4 ♖f3 50.♘xe5+ fxe5 51.♔g2 ♖xc3 52.♖f2+ ♔g6 53.♖b2 a5 54.♖xb6+ ♔g5 55.♖b5 a4 56.♖xc5 ♔f4 57.♖a5 a3
White resigned.



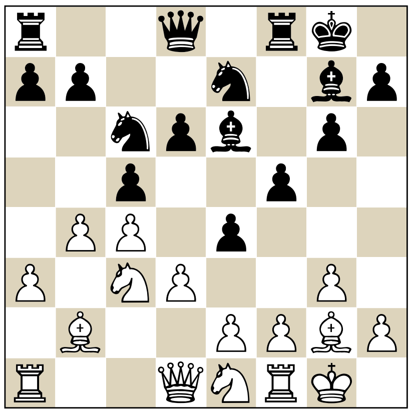
NOTES BY
Ian Nepomniachtchi

EO 28.11 – A37
Vladimir Kramnik
Ian Nepomniachtchi
Moscow 2011 (1)

The first game is always an anxious one and it influences the subsequent play in the tournament. From the very first moves Vladimir let it be known that he wanted to initiate large-scale creative play, and this always suits me.
1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘c6 3.♘c3 e5 4.g3
In our preceding meeting Kramnik followed his preparations for the Candidates' matches by choosing 4.e3.
4...g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.a3



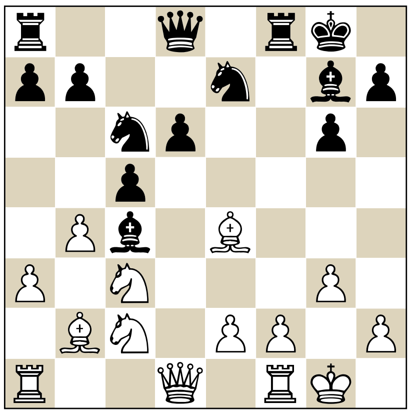
6...d6 I did not want to begin an arms race so early with such a formidable opponent, along the lines of the Gelfand-Grischuk game, Kazan 2011, after the ambitious 6...♘ge7 7.b4 d5. **7.0-0 ♘ge7 8.b4 e4** Now Black has to stick to his principles. **9.♘e1** If 9.♘g5 there is the sobering 9...h6. **9...f5 10.♗b2 0-0 11.d3 ♗e6**



12.dxe4

The preceding moves by both sides were critical and very logical, but now White hastily relieves the tension in the centre. I would have preferred the more flexible 12.♖b1 or 12.♘c2.

12...fxe4 13.♗xe4 ♗xc4 14.♘c2



14...d5

At this point it seemed to me that I had seized the initiative. After all, it is not every time that it is possible to advance the central pawns with gain of tempo.

15.♗g2 d4 It was also interesting to try and tempt White into the variation 15...b6 16.bxc5 bxc5 17.♘e3 d4 18.♘xc4 dxc3 19.♕xd8 ♖axd8 20.♗c1 ♖d4 21.♘e3 ♖b8, when the activity of the black pieces cannot inspire White with optimism. But it is not altogether clear what to do, if my opponent does not succumb to the provocation and plays 16.♖b1!?.

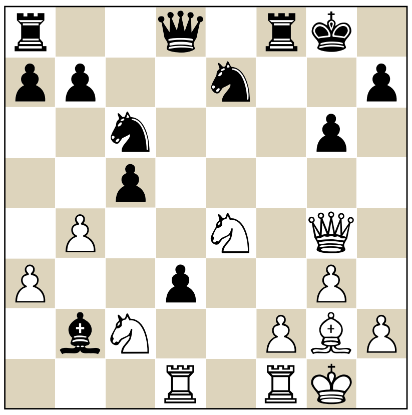
16.♘e4 ♗xe2

This was the idea; otherwise White would be the first to create threats.

17.♕xe2 d3 18.♕g4

Initially I somewhat underestimated the strength of this move, and I had to aim for equality.

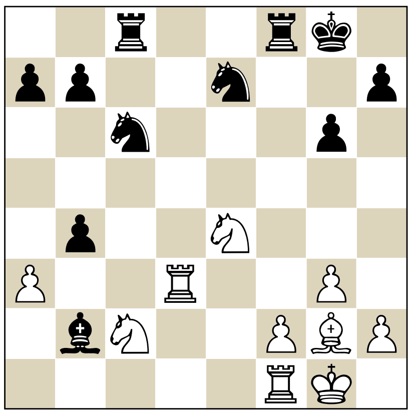
18...♗xb2 19.♖ad1



19...♕c8

One could probably find a dare-devil willing to sacrifice his queen against Vladimir Kramnik, but the resulting variations indicate that the desirable should not be passed off for the actual. After 19...dxc2 20.♖xd8 ♖axd8 21.♘xc5, White is threatening the simple ♕c4, and the only attempt to prevent this is 21...♘d4 (21...c1♕ 22.♖xc1 ♗xc1 23.♕c4+, winning the bishop) 22.♘d3 ♗xa3 23.♗xb7. Even if the position is not so clear, it seemed to me that Black would have to play extremely accurately to avoid blundering something immediately.

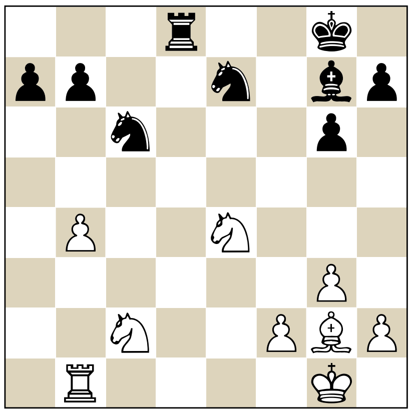
20.♕xc8 ♖axc8 21.♖xd3 cxb4



22.axb4

It made sense to immediately bring the knight into play by 22.♘xb4 ♘xb4 23.axb4 ♖fd8 24.♖fd1 ♖xd3 25.♖xd3 ♖c1+ 26.♗f1 ♘c6 27.b5 ♘d4 28.♔g2, when White retains some pressure in the endgame, although here too the limited material gives Black no grounds for pessimism.

22...♖cd8 23.♖xd8 ♖xd8 24.♖b1 ♗g7

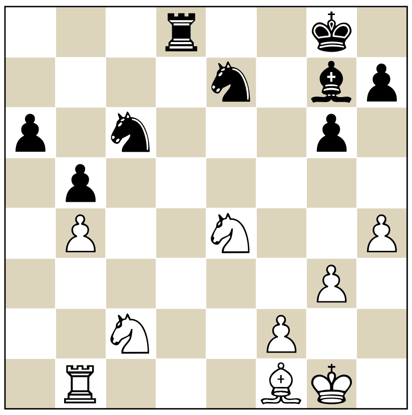


25.h4

White should have played the more concrete 25.b5, when after 25...♘d4 26.♘xd4 ♗xd4 the drawing indicators become ever more apparent.

25...b5 I did not want to make abstract moves, and so I decided to seize space.

26.♗f1 a6



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MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

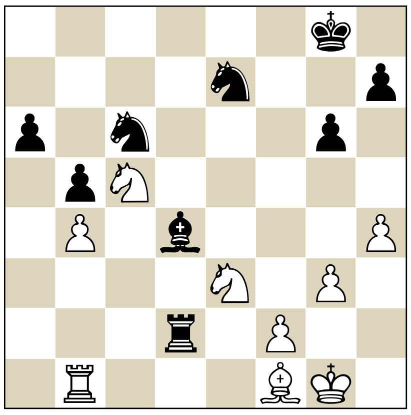
Vladimir Kramnik vs. Ian Nepomniachtchi. You shouldn't read too much in a handshake at the start of a game, but sometimes, in hindsight, it's tempting to do so anyway.

The position would probably remain equal after any move preventing the immediate activation of the black pieces, but taking account of the fact that Vladimir was already beginning to run short of time, it will be easier for the reader to understand the origin of White's subsequent mistakes.

27.♘c5 ♖d2 28.♘e3

Virtuoso manoeuvres such as 28.♘e1 ♗d4 29.♘ed3 can be conceived only in the quiet of one's study.

28...♗d4



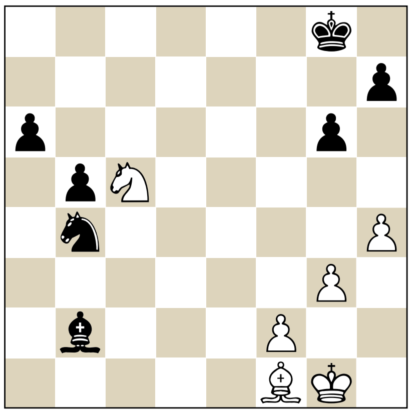
29.♘e4

It is possible that Black's threats in the variation 29.♘xa6 ♘e5 30.♗xb5 ♘f5 are not so deadly, but the probability of being mated is also high.

29...♖b2

The move in the game seemed incredibly strong; meanwhile, the simple 29...♖a2 would have retained all the advantages of the position.

30.♖xb2 ♗xb2 31.♘c2 ♘d5 32.♘c5 ♘dxb4 33.♘xb4 ♘xb4

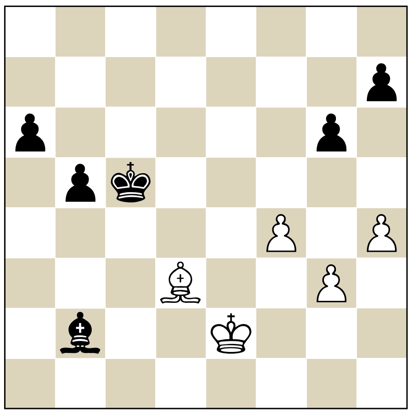


34.♘d3 During the game I was more afraid of the position arising after 34.♘xa6 (immediately, or after the preparatory 34.♔g2) 34...♘xa6 35.♗xb5; to demonstrate a win here will be extremely difficult.

34...♘xd3 35.♗xd3 ♔f7

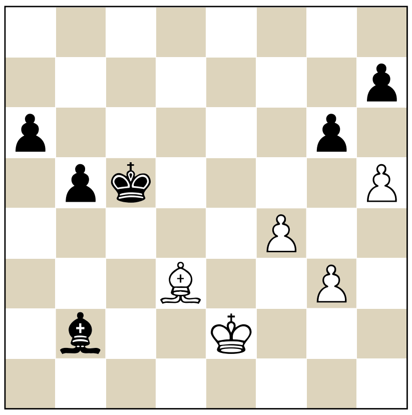
I realized that White's drawing chances were very good, and my only hope was that the opponent would have to take important decisions in time-trouble.

36.f4 ♔e6 37.♔f2 ♔d5 38.♔e2 ♔c5



39.♔d2

It is undoubtedly logical to bring the king closer to the passed pawns, but in the given position more radical measures were demanded. 39.h5 and now:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

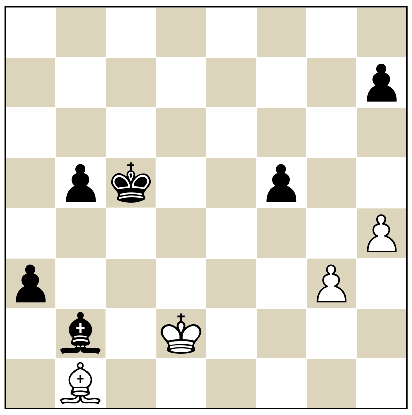
A) 39...a5 40.hxg6 a4 (40...b4 41.♗c2) and White succeeds in stopping the pawns by 41.♗c2 hxg6 42.♔d2;

B) 39...gxh5 40.♗xh7 a5 41.♔d3 ♗g7 42.♗g6 b4 43.♗f7 a4 44.♗e8 (the final important nuance) 44...a3 45.♗f7 with a draw.

39...a5 40.f5

White is also unsuccessful with 40.h5 a4 41.hxg6 b4. It was probably this last move that Vladimir had overlooked.

40...a4 41.♗c2 a3 42.♗b1 gxf5



The rest does not require any commentary, since here the conversion of the advantage is largely a matter of taste.

43.♔c2 ♔b4 44.♗a2 ♗e5 45.♗e6 a2 46.♗xa2 ♗xg3 47.h5 h6 48.♔d3 ♔a3 49.♗d5 b4 50.♔c2 ♗e5 51.♗b3 f4 52.♗d5 ♗f6 53.♔b1 b3

White resigned.

Finally, I would like to thank my trainer Vladimir Potkin with whom I analysed this game.

continued on page 36

NEW IN CHESS

While his other guests play blitz or bughouse, Arkady Dvorkovich has a chat with Ian Nepomniachtchi and his coach Vladimir Potkin.

Arkady Dvorkovich and the Power to Pull Strings

In chess circles outside Russia he is barely known, yet he is one of the most powerful persons of our game. Arkady Dvorkovich is not only the Economic Adviser to President Medvedev (and as a consequence one of the most influential men in the country), he is also the Head of the Advisory Board of the Russian Chess Federation. His choice for Kirsan Ilyumzhinov in the FIDE presidential elections essentially put a damper on Anatoly Karpov's aspirations. Dvorkovich strongly believes in the educational merits of chess and wants to restore Russia's position as the unchallenged number one chess super power. In Moscow, **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** got 20 minutes of the precious time of a very busy man with an unlimited love for chess.

On the free day of the Tal Memorial the participating grandmasters are invited by Arkady Dvorkovich to come to his chess parlour, two floors of spacious rooms in a modern bank building. The chess parlour is named after Vladimir Dvorkovich, the host's father, who passed away in 2005. On free days, chess players are generally not too eager to be entertained, but in this case all of them are present. They know that Arkady Dvorkovich has a real passion for chess. They also know that without his behind-the-scenes efforts there would most likely not have been a Tal Memorial with the prestige of what we saw this year. What's more, those who have been here before know that there will be an abundance of tasty Uzbek food from a restaurant nearby and a relaxed atmosphere.

Over the past years, countless prominent chess personalities have come to the Vladimir Dvorkovich chess club. About once a month there is an evening where players mingle with politicians and businessmen and the mood is always jovial. This time there is a blitz tournament for anyone who wants to take part. Others create their own fun. Hikaru Nakamura and Max Dlugy play bughouse against Sergey Karjakin and an unidentified guest, and when Nakamura has had enough, Dlugy happily continues in a bughouse 'simul'. An amused Peter Svidler watches the action, in a quiet corner Arkady Dvorkovich sips from a cocktail and chats with Ian Nepomniachtchi and his coach Vladimir Potkin.

The guests were welcomed on the lower floor of the club, part of which is occupied by a small chess library. The shelves behind glass doors are filled with books and trophies and on the walls there are photos of days gone by. Among the books are numerous copies of the book that Arkady Dvorkovich had made for his father, an international arbiter and official with a passion for statistics and the rules of chess that he was always trying to fine-tune. A photo of Dvorkovich Sr. and Garry Kasparov brings back memories of a hilarious episode during one of the Linares tournaments in the mid-1990s. Rustem Kamsky had expressed his fears that people were trying to poison his son Gata, and when his accusations met with incredulity, he exclaimed dramatically: 'Then tell me, what is this Dvorkovich doing in the kitchen?' In those years Vladimir Dvorkovich accompanied Kasparov to various Linares tournaments. His presence in the kitchen may be explained by the fact that the quickest route from the restaurant to the playing room was through the kitchen. Incidentally, father Kamsky's accusations inspired Nigel Short to put a glass of orange juice on Gata's table with a note saying 'Beware, poison!'

NEW IN CHESS

Arkady Dvorkovich on Garry Kasparov: 'We have to get him back to chess.'

Arkady Dvorkovich has known Garry Kasparov for many years and he stresses time and again that he continues to admire the 13th World Champion as a great chess player. He even supported a recent (unsuccessful) attempt to involve Kasparov in the training of the Russian national team. On the other hand, as their political positions are worlds apart, they have no personal contact these days. Whereas Kasparov leaves no opportunity unused to slash the current leadership, Dvorkovich is part of the political establishment. Following his economic studies in Russia and the United States, he embarked on a stupendous career. At the age of 28 he became Vice-Minister of Economy, the youngest one in history. Under President Putin he was Head of the Expert Department of the President of the Russian Federation. Then Putin's successor Medvedev asked him to be his chief economic adviser. Ironically, on the eve of the FIDE presidential elections last year, Kasparov stated in an interview that he had paid for part of Dvorkovich's studies in the US.

As his political star rose, Arkady Dvorkovich never forgot about his love for chess. From 2007 to 2010 he served as vice-president of the Russian Chess Federation under Alexander Zhukov, the other political force (Deputy Prime Minister!) that has given Russian chess an enormous boost. Both had to give up their posts in the federation after a legal reform by President Medvedev in 2010 that forbids politicians to be involved in the running of sports organisations on a day-to-day basis. Zhukov, who now heads the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014, continues his chess activities as Vice-Head of the Advisory Board of the Russian Chess Federation.

Getting to talk to a man as prominent and busy as Arkady Dvorkovich is not easy, although I was pleasantly surprised by the first reaction to my request. Before I flew to Moscow I sent

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Arkady Dvorkovich congratulates Boris Gelfand on the signing of the match contract.

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Once a month chess players, politicians and busynessmen are received at his chess parlour.

Together with Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov

an email to Ilya Levitov, the Managing Director of the RCF, inquiring about the possibility of an interview. Literally within minutes I received a positive reply. As I would see on various occasions during my stay in Moscow, Mr. Dvorkovich almost permanently keeps an eye on his phones and tends to reply instantly. Yet, having an OK didn't mean that there was an appointment. For days Levitov would keep me informed about my chances saying ‘Probably not today, he is with the President now’ or ‘He just got off the plane and intends to visit the tournament’, followed a couple of hours later as Dvorkovich rushed out off the Pashkov House by ‘No chance, today, he was not in the mood’.

Finally the moment came at the end of the press conference at the Interfax Press Agency the day after the tournament. There Vishy Anand, Boris Gelfand, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and Arkady Dvorkovich signed the contract for the World Championship match in Moscow next May. As everyone left the stage, Levitov gave me a nod to follow them to a room upstairs.

Arriving in the room, Dvorkovich sits down at a long table filled with glasses and wine bottles between Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and his assistant Berek Balgabaev. Anand, accompanied by his wife Aruna and Hans-Walter Schmitt, and Gelfand, together with his second Alexander Khuzman, also sit down. Glasses are filled and a toast is made, but apart from a couple of small sips everyone feels that it's a bit early for wine. Hardly a word is uttered and everyone acts relieved when someone starts to speak about the first time Anand and Gelfand played each other, and the first time they came to Moscow. A joke is made about their age. With so many young talents around it is amazing that the world championship will be contested by two players over 40. Ilyumzhinov says that years before Kasparov announced his retirement in Linares, he told him that a chess player should quit when he is 40. It's a story he had told before and it is unclear what it is based on. He adds that he has invited Kasparov to be the head of the Chess Academy and Dvorkovich nods and says, ‘Yes, we have to get him back to chess.’ There is silence and you feel that everyone is wondering what Chess Academy Ilyumzhinov is talking about and that it is not very likely that Kasparov has even replied. Then Gelfand asks: ‘What did he answer?’ Everyone starts laughing when Ilyumzhinov says: ‘He's still thinking...’ And the laughter turns into hilarity when he finishes his sentence: ‘About how much money he will ask!’

> ‘I still consider chess as a very good game and I admire people who can play chess as a profession, but it's not for me.’

A couple of minutes later everyone gets up. The session is over. As they leave, Arkady Dvorkovich comes over to my side of the table and takes a seat. Once again I marvel at his big black eyes that seem to watch the world in constant joy and wonderment. His soft voice and the small laughs that often end his sentences add to an image of accessibility and friendliness. But of course you must be tough and determined if you want to get where he is now. At a recent meeting of the Advisory Board he took Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and Berek Balgabaev to task for FIDE's chaotic calendar. Not mincing words Dvorkovich made it abundantly clear that he was fed up with the constant changing of dates of events. He needed firm fixtures if he was to talk to prospective sponsors.

But now he is calm and friendly, although at the same time you feel that there is a protective shield around him that stops you from getting close. He briefly discusses with Levitov the winning chance that Nepomniachtchi missed in his last game against Aronian. As he turns to me, he speaks in praise of Magnus Carlsen. I tell him that the night before Carlsen told me that he always believes he is going to win until it is no longer theoretically possible. He laughs enthusiastically.

In the morning he played football, another of his passions. A couple of days ago he had asked Magnus to join him. Magnus loved the idea, but he also had a flight to catch. Till the last moment he had been doubting if he could play football and still be in time to catch his plane. Unfortunately it was not realistic.

With a barely visible nod Dvorkovich indicates that I can ask my first question, and I ask him about the chess environment he grew up in.

'My father was living in the chess world and most of the time he was not at home. And when he was at home he was completely occupied by chess. I was following what he was doing. He was writing articles, working on statistics since he was good at that, he was working on the rules of chess. I helped him with translations, since I learned English before he could talk and read English. Actually, I started with German, since I was learning German in secondary school, and translated some articles from German chess magazines. Starting from the late 70s, the first thing I remember, besides the fact that I went to the chess club or learned chess when I was 5 or 6, was the first tournament I went to watch with him. In Tallinn, the Keres Memorial, I think in 1979, when I was seven. We also went to all the tournaments that were held in Moscow at the time. Our guests were usually people from the chess world. We also visited my father's friends regularly, including people like Salo Flohr. It was great, he had an apartment in the middle of Moscow where we went, it was really enjoyable.'

With his typical, seemingly apologetic smile he adds: 'I first met Karpov when I was 7 or 8, and then Kasparov when I was 10, so I knew them when I was really young.'

'I first played in a club in our district, five minutes from the place where we lived. And then I went to the Pioneer Palace. And I participated in school tournaments and district tournaments, city tournaments, with the school team, no individual tournaments.'

'It was clear from the very beginning that I was not going to be a professional chess player. I was learning chess and playing chess for fun mostly. And I enjoyed it very much. It was a very good part of my life. I played in some tournaments, but in fact I quit when I was 14. Well, I played in one tournament when I studied in Moscow State University. I played for our department team and we actually took the first place, the first time in many years that our department was the best. I played on the last board. Somebody was missing and so they invited me and... (hesitates), well, at least I didn't ruin the story. We actually had a grandmaster on first board, so our team was very good.'

For a while his father may have hoped that he would become a chess player, but to himself it became clear quite soon that he would go a different road.

At the recent G-20 summit in Cannes, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his chief economic advisor Arkady Dvorkovich watch British PM David Cameron walk by.

'I think chess is very helpful in all kinds of intellectual activities. Chess improves memory and chess improves logical thinking, which has been very helpful in my professional life. But I thought that chess is a game, not a profession. And there were also other sports that I was attracted to. Maybe I could become a good football player and score the winning goal at the World Cup. Those thoughts I had, but not about chess. I still consider chess as a very good game and I admire people who can play chess as a profession, but it's not for me. At university I played chess, football, basketball and ice-hockey. Both here and in the States. But in the States I only sometimes played chess, not often.'

His conviction that chess contributes to the training of memory and to logical thinking is the reason why the emphasis of his work for the federation is on propagating chess for children and amateurs.

'Yes, exactly. Our key objective is chess for kids, for people in general, not for professional players. But to work for kids, we also have to work for professional players, the stars that they should follow. The two are connected. Otherwise it is hard to tell kids why they should play chess. If they like the stars, they will start playing.'

On the other hand, having been raised in a chess environment, it's easy to imagine that he also wants to bring back the glory days of Russian chess.

'Certainly. Our chess school, I think, is still the best. We are coming back in terms of management, in terms of training practices, schools. It just takes time. We need some time to recover from the chaos of the 90s. It's not easy, but I think we are going in the right direction. I have a clear vision of what we should do. Some things are already in place, some things are going to be in place soon. We have some very good professional players now. Whether they can be World Champions we will see, they still have time to be successful. Sergey Karjakin and Ian Nepomniachtchi, they are very good, they have chances. But also some guys from the older generation, including Vladimir Kramnik, Peter Svidler, Alexander Grischuk, Alexander Morozevich. They always have a chance, like Boris Gelfand showed this year. That's a good story.'

For a man with a schedule as busy as his, it's hard to imagine that he has much time left to dedicate to chess. Yet you never know. After all, Ken Rogoff, whose schedule of flying all over the world all the time, speeding from one meeting to another, must be quite similar. And when last year I asked him what role chess played in his life, he baffled me by saying: 'I think of chess all the time!'

'Ken Rogoff came to my office a few years ago, I think in 2005 or 2006.

I knew that he was playing a lot of chess in the 1970s and I found one of his games. I put it on my desk, a position from his game, and asked him whether he remembered how the game continued.

And he didn't (laughs). So I showed him.'

'I follow all the tournaments, all the big tournaments, at least the results of our players. And I play against chess programs on my iPhone or iPad. It's fun. Sometimes you're tired of reading or watching movies, then chess is a good change, I would say.'

> 'They were trying to mix chess and politics and that was not acceptable.'

As both he and his father had ties with Kasparov, his name is bound to come up in our talk. Isn't it problematic that the greatest player Russia has known is politically opposed to him?

'No, it isn't. We separate chess and politics completely. There is no connection. We invite Garry Kasparov to tournaments, we even thought about the possibility of him helping our national team, but it didn't work out. But again, we are separating chess and politics altogether.'

And what made him decide to support Kirsan Ilyumzhinov in the FIDE elections rather than Anatoly Karpov?

'A couple of points. One is that I believe that Kirsan Ilyumzhinov is a better manager than Anatoly Karpov. Anatoly Karpov is certainly a great chess champion, but not a great manager (laughs). That was my belief. I looked at the team and the people that he was bringing with him, and I didn't think they were better. And the second thing, I already told you that we are separating chess and politics. And they didn't separate chess and politics. They were trying to mix chess and politics and that was not acceptable.'

Meaning that if from a management point of view Karpov had been the best candidate it would have been possible for him to separate chess and politics if Karpov had done so?

'Yes, I think so.'

As I feel that my time is running out, I cannot help but ask the predictable question of whether President Medvedev plays chess. It turns out that he knows how to play and that he has a chess set in his office, but he doesn't play. How different it is for Arkady Dvorkovich, who is always happy to share his passion while he is travelling the world.

'It is always surprising when you find out that people also play chess. Well, it is not surprising here in Russia, but if you go abroad, sometimes it is surprising. Last year I went to Baden-Baden for a couple of days to have a regular medical check-up. I went to the local chess club and even played a game. It was a draw. I had some chances, but couldn't win. But they're practising like hell there. It was interesting to watch these people and I spent hours at that club.'

My time is up and with a friendly nod and a handshake he ends the conversation. As he gets up two Interfax correspondents almost jump at him to ask a couple of questions on an economic issue. As he puts on his coat he patiently replies to two questions. Then it's been enough. His son is waiting, he has to leave. And off he goes. ■

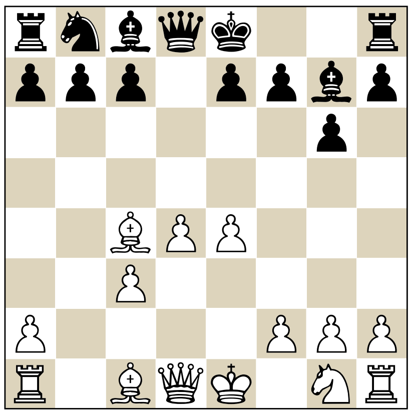
NOTES BY
Peter Svidler

GI 5.9 – D87
Hikaru Nakamura
Peter Svidler
Moscow 2011 (3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5

With all the new developments regarding Hikaru's training regimen, this was not an automatic choice – but then I thought this could be a wonderful opportunity to learn a thing or two.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4



7...c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♗g4 11.f3 ♗d7

With this game, and the 10...b6 I played in Round 6 against Magnus, I believe I am one sub-line away from earning a prestigious 'Too Lazy To Learn One Line and Stick With It' badge awarded to Grünfeld players who have tried every single option known to man in reply to 7.♗c4. This particular choice was influenced by two things – the by-now-sacrosanct 30-second conversation with Alexander Grischuk during Euro Teams, and the fact that I finally managed (one year after everybody else) to track down and buy Avrukh's *The Grünfeld Defence* Volumes 1 & 2, and even read them in preparation for this event.

12.♖b1 ♕c7 13.♗d3

After the tournament had finished, I had a very pleasant dinner with head RCF honcho Ilya Levitov, Emil Sutovsky, who provided wonder-

Peter Svidler lost in thought at the prize-giving: 'I think that Hikaru will justifiably be unhappy about his play against me, but I think I played an exemplary Grünfeld against him – lots of typical ideas, good execution, very nice game.'

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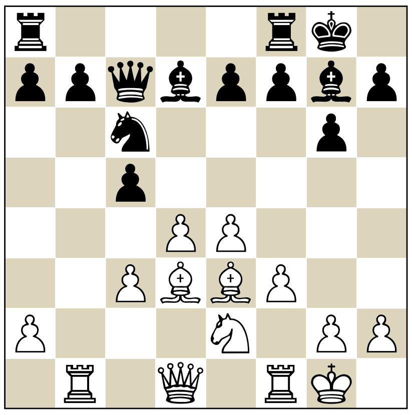
ful commentary for the entire event, and the Grischuk clan. What with nice Caucasian food, some wine and very light banter, I'd been enjoying myself greatly – until this game came up, which is when things turned slightly eerie. Natalia looked at me for a sec, gathering breath, and then said 'Rook f to d8? Rook f to d8? How could you?' I tried, meekly, to defend myself, explaining that I had not, in fact, forgotten what her husband and the Avrukh book told me to play here, and that my move might have some merit as well, but she was having none of it. 'But you said yourself during the press-conference that you were worse!' Apparently, Alexander gave up watching the game in disgust after seeing this on the board, and Natalia, the poor soul, bore the brunt of his righteous indignation (according to her, not even their daughter was entirely spared) – and she was now passing it on.

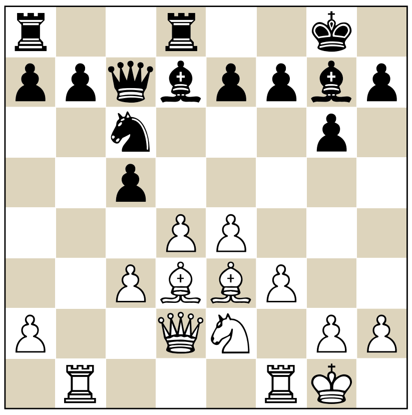


13...♖fd8

Universal wisdom insists that it's the wrong rook, and after this game I might be inclined to agree – but I settled on this being the more precise of the two moves when analysing this position with the pawn on f2, and after Hikaru had played 13.♗d3, 15 minutes of careful consideration led me to believe I might need the rook on c8 (or, in some cases, even on a8) more than I would on f8 in this version.

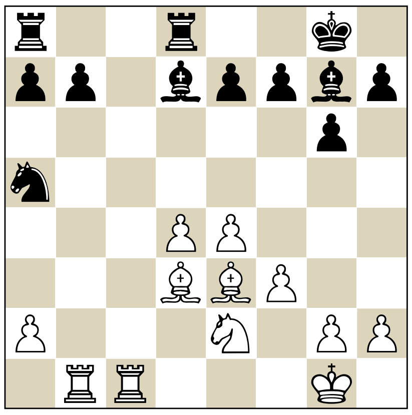
14.♕d2

An entirely natural move, which, nonetheless, gave me a serious pause.



14...a6

I did not feel very comfortable with 14...e6 15.♖fc1 ♗e8 16.♗g5 ♖d7 17.♗b5! a6 18.♗xc6 ♕xc6 19.♕e3, where it seemed to me that Black has successfully misplaced most of his pieces for not very much in return. My next idea was to play 14...cxd4 15.cxd4 ♕a5, but then I realized that the endgame after 16.♕xa5 ♘xa5 17.♖fc1 is highly unpleasant.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

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Some years ago, in a similar structure, I stumbled onto the idea of playing ...e7-e5, forcing White to either give up his beautiful centre or go d5, which cuts off his own pieces, most notably the e2 knight, and allows ...♗f8, with all kinds of counterplay on the queenside – but here, the threat of ♗d2 is too strong for that.

It was probably best to play 14...♖ac8 – but I was worried about 15.d5 ♘e5 16.c4, and decided to get ready for it.

15.f4

Of course. White is ready to assume command in the centre.

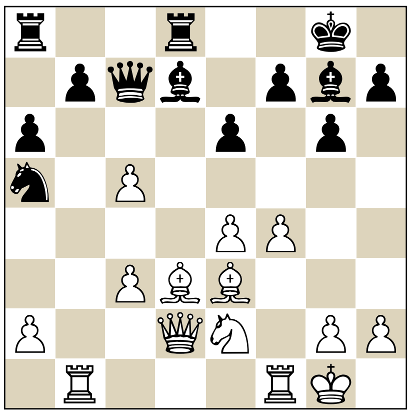
15...e6

Otherwise Black will be steamrolled.

16.dxc5

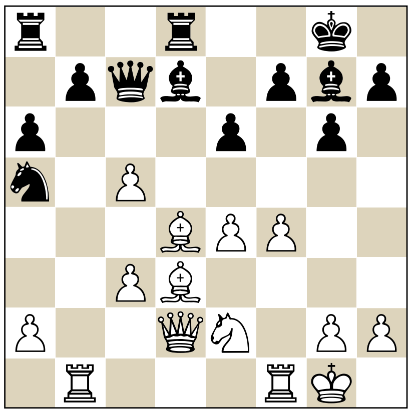
There are other options, but I like this move. If White chooses 16.f5, instead, Black can reply 16...exf5 17.exf5 cxd4 18.cxd4 ♕a5!, and the position is far from clear.

16...♘a5



17.♘d4?!

The beginning of White's problems. I believe it would have been better to play 17.♗d4!, and I don't particularly like any of Black's options:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 17...♗f8 18.♗f6 ♗xc5+ 19.♘d4 ♖dc8 20.♔h1, and I wouldn't really fancy defending this with black – White did not even have to sacrifice anything;

B) My planned 17...♗b5 18.♗xb5 axb5 19.♖xb5 e5? (the machine suggests Black is doing relatively OK after 19...♘c4 20.♕d3 ♘a3 21.♖b3 ♗f8, but it's hard to believe that, with accurate play, White is not better here) was based on a miscalculation: after 20.fxe5 ♘c4 the fact that the queen has a new square now completely escaped my attention: 21.♕f4!, and after 21...♖xa2 22.e6 Black is toast. This theme would reappear in Round 8, where I managed to completely ignore first ♘d3-f4 and then ♕b8-f4, all in the course of one game vs Levon.

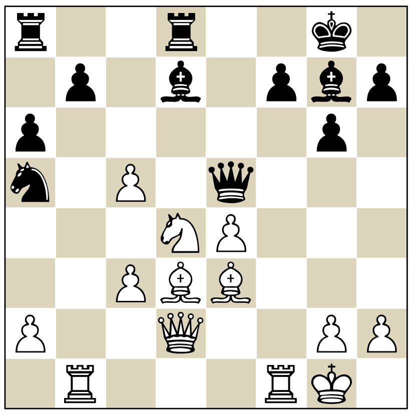
17...e5

Now Black will at least have some targets to play against.

18.fxe5

Sakaev won a wonderful game vs Belov in 2003 by playing f5 in a very similar position – but the inclusion of ...♖fd8 and ♕d2 should favour Black.

18...♕xe5



19.♕b2?!

But this is the wrong flank altogether. White would still be better after the more natural 19.♕f2 ♗e8 (19...♕e7 20.h4 ♗e8 21.♖bd1 ♖ac8, and White can win the exchange at any point by playing ♗g5, or he can continue to improve his position by playing 22.h5 or 22.♗e2) 20.♗c2 (20.h4!?) 20...♖ac8 21.♘e2, planning ♗d4 and ♘f4-d5.

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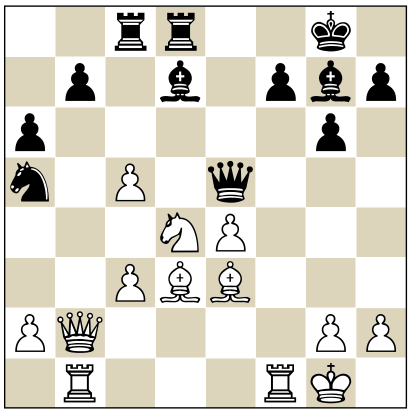
The text-move nets White some material – but at a heavy positional cost.

19...♖ac8

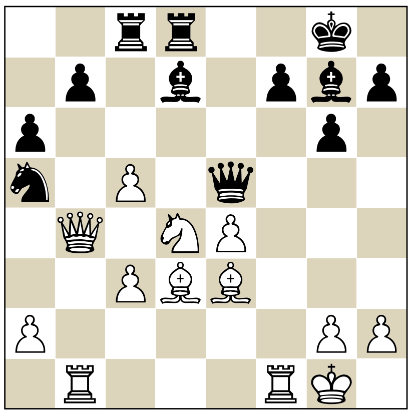
Inviting White to proceed with his plan.



20.♕b4?!

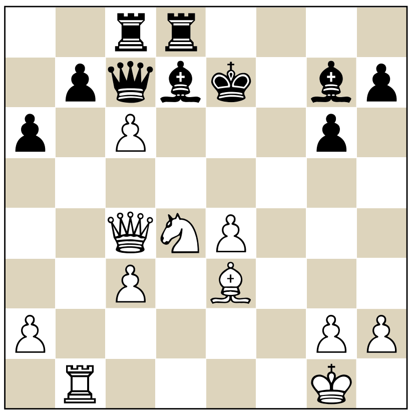
The machine claims that White is still better if he admits his inaccuracy and goes back to f2, but that's always a very hard thing to do.

20.♕b6 allows the additional option of 20...♕c7, but I was still picking between that move and the following line: 20...♕xc5!? 21.♘f5! ♕xb6 22.♘e7+ ♔f8 23.♗xb6 ♔xe7 24.♗xa5 b5! – very gratifyingly endorsed by the machine as the best, and assessed, as I did during the game, as dead equal – when the queen landed on b4.



20...♕xc5

I was worried that 20...♕c7 might make me a candidate for Game of the Month, and not in a good way: 21.♖xf7!? ♔xf7 22.♗c4+ ♘xc4 (22...♔e8 23.♖f1 is already lost for Black) 23.♕xc4+ ♔e7 24.c6!

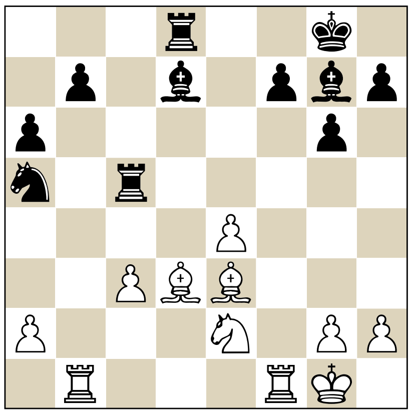


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

(I did not see this move during the game, but should still get some credit for sensing something was wrong) 24...♗xd4 (24...bxc6 25.♗g5+ ♗f6 26.♕c5+ – the point – 26...♔f7 27.♖f1winning) 25.♕xd4 ♗xc6 26.♗g5+ ♔f7 27.♖f1+ ♔g8 28.♕c4+, and even though Black does not in fact lose – 28...♗d5! (28...♔g7 29.♗f6+ ♔h6 30.♕c5 and wins) 29.♕xc7 ♖xc7 30.♗xd8 ♖c8 31.exd5 ♖xd8, with decent drawing chances – I did not fancy allowing any of that.

Moreover, by this point I had figured out 20...♕xc5 is more than adequate.

21.♕xc5 ♖xc5 22.♘e2

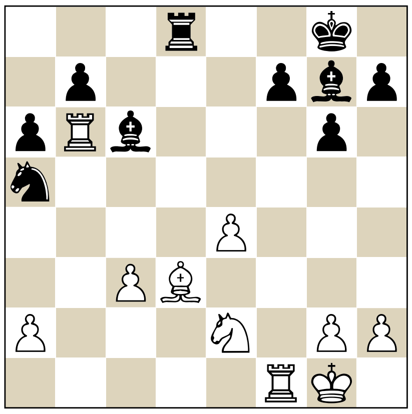


22...♖c6!

22...♖cc8 23.♗b6 ♗a4 24.♗xd8 ♖xd8 is a similar idea, but it allows White much more freedom, and after the possible 25.♘d4 ♗xd4+ 26.cxd4 ♖xd4 27.♗e2 ♖xe4 28.♗f3 Black is facing un unpleasant defensive task.

23.♗b6 ♖xb6 24.♖xb6 ♗c6!

Here, however, White is so utterly uncoordinated that he needs to look for equality straight away.



25.♖f3

The point of Black's play is that 25.♘f4 is met by 25...♗h6!, which forces the

MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

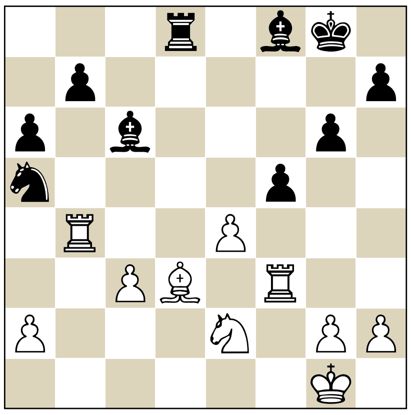
Commentator Emil Sutovsky is joined by Natalia Zhukova, her husband Alexander Grischuk and RCF Managing Director Ilya Levitov.

immediate return of the material: 26.♖xc6 (26.♗e2 ♖d2 is not an improvement) 26...♘xc6, and Black is clearly slightly better.

25...f5 26.♖b4

26.♘g3 was suggested as one possible improvement, but in fact after 26...♗xc3 27.♖b1 ♗e5! 28.♖e1 f4 29.♘e2 g5 I believe Black is going to press, risk-free, for a while.

26...♗f8



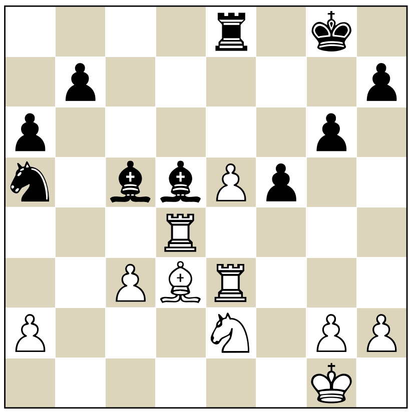
27.♖d4 We both thought that it would have been safer, and better, to play 27.♘g3 here, pretty much forcing Black to play 27...♗xb4 (the machine suggests the incredibly cool 27...h5 28.h4 b5! 29.♔h2 – 29.♖b1 ♗e7! – 29...♗xb4 30.cxb4 ♘c4 with a black edge – but I seriously doubt if I would be able to find this) 28.cxb4 ♖d4 29.bxa5 fxe4 30.♘xe4 ♗xe4 31.♗xe4 ♖xe4 32.♖b3 ♖a4 33.♖xb7 ♖xa2 34.h4, which should be an easy draw.

However, Hikaru, who was by this point in some time-trouble, decided to return the exchange in a different way.

27...♗c5 28.♖e3

It looked as if White is fine now – but after some thought I realized I did not, in fact, have to take on d4 any time soon, and could improve my position for a while before committing myself.

28...♖e8 29.e5 ♗d5!

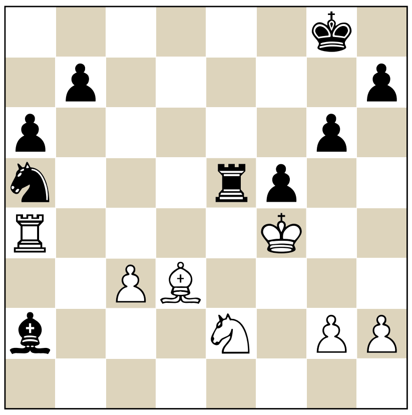


30.♔f2

Connected with a blunder, but White is in trouble even after the best 30.a4 ♘c6 31.♔f1 – however, it would force me to find the alien-looking 31...♗a2! (31...♘xe5? is a bit of a misstep: 32.♖xe5! ♖xe5 33.♖xd5! ♖xd5 34.♗c4 and White wins, as is 31...♗f7 32.e6, and Black is forced to trade rooks, since 32...♗xe6 33.♖xe6 ♖xe6 34.♗c4 loses) 32.♖h3 (amazingly, there is nothing better) 32...♘xe5! 33.♖dh4 h5, and White is a mess. 30.♖xd5 ♗xe3+ 31.♔f1 ♘c6 32.e6 ♔f8! 33.♗c4 ♖d8 does not promise equality either.

30...♗xa2

The threat is still 31...♘c6, but now the a-pawn is gone. Hikaru must have played 30.♔f2 believing this move was impossible in view of **31.♖a4 ♗xe3+ 32.♔xe3 ♖xe5+ 33.♔f4**



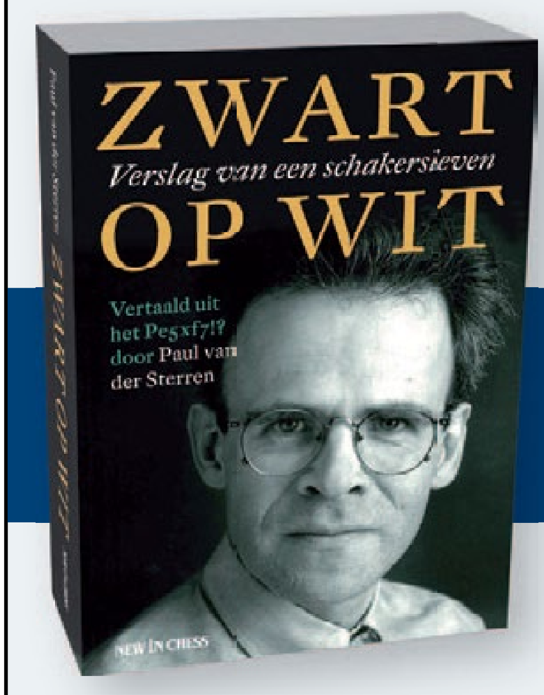
but **33...♗b3** shows he left the line one ply too early. Now Black is just totally winning.

34.♔xe5

The best option – with rooks on the board, there would have been no hope whatsoever, but now White has at least a perfectly active king.

34...♗xa4 35.♔d6

I took a few minutes here to take stock – there are still ways to make things difficult for yourself here – and found a decent solution: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OP WIT
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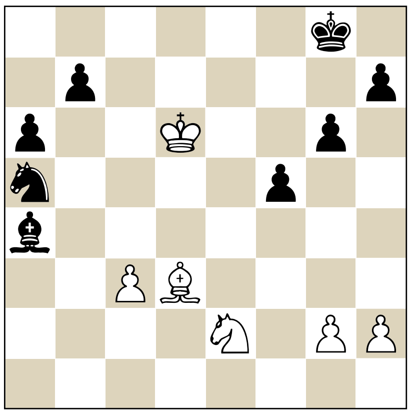
ШЕСТОЙ МЕМОРИАЛ МИХАИЛА ТАЛЯ · МОСКВА 2011

NEW IN CHESS

The final phase of the 2011 Tal Memorial. Vishy Anand ponders his move. Vladimir Kramnik understands he is in trouble. Magnus Carlsen knows he's got Hikaru Nakamura on the ropes.



35...♗c6 36.g3 ♔g7!

The immediate 36...♗e4 37.♗xe4 fxe4 38.♔d5 e3 39.♔d4 should also be winning, but why not gain an extra tempo or two?

37.♘d4 37.♔c5 ♘b3+ 38.♔b6 a5 does not look promising either.

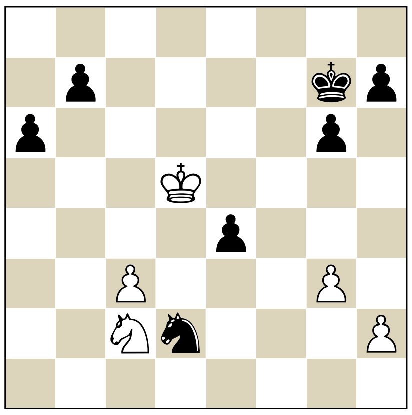
37...♗e4 38.♗xe4

38.♗e2 is met by 38...♘c6.

38...fxe4 39.♘c2

39.♔d5 e3 40.♔e4 ♘c4 is clearly lost.

39...♘c4+ 40.♔d5 ♘d2



Knight endings with two extra pawns are rarely problematic, and this one is no exception.

41.♔c5 ♔f6!

I suspect that most legal moves would win here, but I thought this was the cleanest, and involved the minimum of fuss.

Moscow 2011 cat. XXII

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2826	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	5½	2850
2	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2802	½	*	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	5½	2853
3	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2763	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	5	2820
4	Ian Nepomniachtchi	IGM	RUS	2730	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	5	2824
5	Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2775	½	0	½	½	*	½	1	½	½	1	5	2819
6	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2811	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	4½	2772
7	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2755	0	½	½	½	0	½	*	1	½	1	4½	2778
8	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2800	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	*	½	½	3½	2693
9	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2744	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	3½	2700
10	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2758	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	*	3	2653

42.♔b6 ♔e5 43.♔xb7

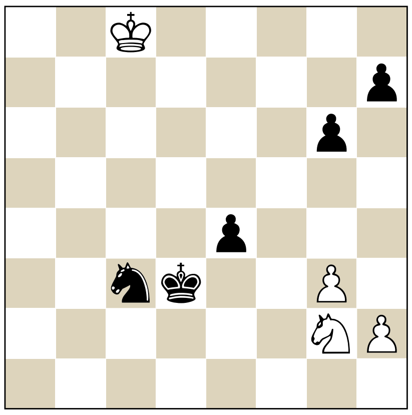
Or 43.♘e3 ♘b1 44.♘g4+ ♔e6 45.c4 ♘d2 46.c5 ♔d5, and Black gets through.

43...♔d5 44.♘e3+ ♔c5 45.♔xa6 ♘b1

Winning the c3 pawn, and keeping the white king boxed in far away from the final action. The rest is easy.

46.♔b7 ♘xc3 47.♔c8 ♔d4 48.♘g2 ♔d3

Creating the threat of ...g5 and ...♔e2-f2.



White resigned.

The following day, Hikaru came up to me in the players' lounge and relayed the news that the man almost solely responsible for my picking up the Grünfeld all those years ago had said that he felt I had played that game well, at least from some point on. Very high praise indeed! ■

Hou Yifan

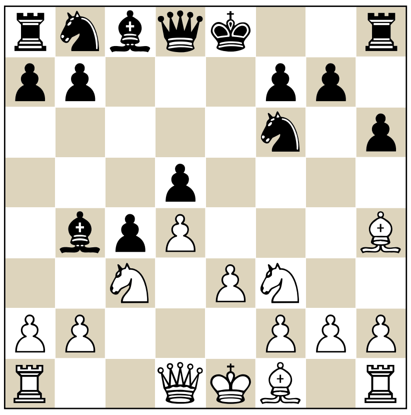
In an almost wondrously one-sided match Women's World Champion Hou Yifan successfully defended her title against Challenger Humpy Koneru from India. In the Albanian capital of Tirana, the 17-year-old Chinese title-holder was never in any real danger against her slightly higher-rated opponent. With wins in Games 3, 6 and 7, she prematurely decided the issue after only eight of the scheduled 10 games had been played. As a result, the players had to stay on for a full week to wait for the closing ceremony at the Presidential Palace, where guest-of-honour former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachov presented the prizes. Hou Yifan kindly used some of the unexpected free time in Tirana to annotate her favourite game for us.

Hou Yifan

NI 27.2 – D38
Humpy Koneru
Hou Yifan
Tirana 2011 (3)

This game was played in the third round after the two previous games had been drawn. This was my first win and my favourite game of the match.

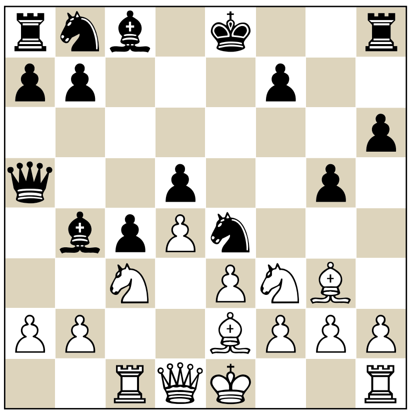
1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗h4 c5 8.e3 c4



9.♗e2

Here the main line is 9.♘d2, which Alexandra Kosteniuk played against me in the Grand Prix in Rostov.

9...g5 10.♗g3 ♘e4 11.♖c1 ♕a5



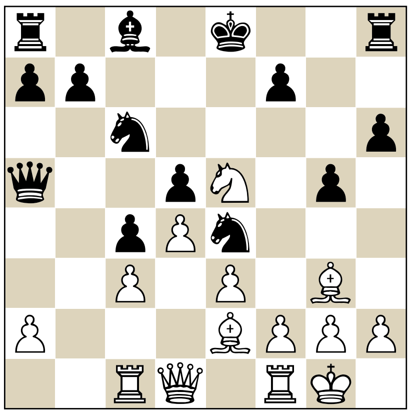
12.♘e5!

A great move discovered by Veselin Topalov. If White castles first, this may lead to perpetual check: 12.0-0 ♗xc3 13.bxc3 ♘xc3 14.♖xc3 ♕xc3 15.♘e5 0-0 16.♗h5 ♗e6 17.♗g6 ♘d7 18.♘xd7 ♗xd7 19.♕h5 ♖ae8 20.♕xh6 fxg6 21.♕xg6+.

12...♗xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♘c6 14.0-0

retains title

Hou Yifan, the old and the new Women's World Champion, poses for the press together with FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, guest-of-honour Mikhail Gorbachov and her mother, her most loyal fan.



14...0-0

An interesting new move. During the game I remembered that 14...♘xc3?! had been played several times before, but it looks dangerous for Black. For example: 15.♖xc3 ♕xc3 16.♗h5 0-0 17.♕f3 ♔g7 18.♕xd5 ♗e6 19.♕e4, and although Black has a material advantage, there's enough compensation for White. The black king is exposed and all White's minor pieces are attacking on the kingside.

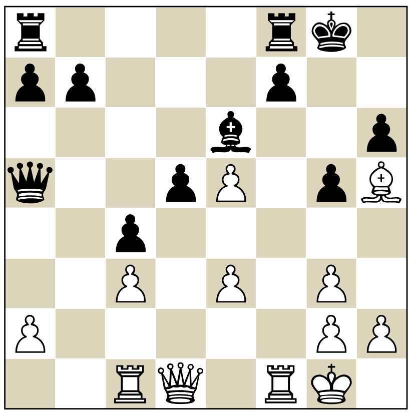
15.♗f3!

Nice homework! This time Humpy had really wonderful and sufficient opening preparation, which forced me to spend too much time in the opening.

15...♘xg3 16.fxg3 ♘xe5

An important point. Other possibilities are 16...f5, to prevent e4, or 16...♗e6 17.♗h5 ♕xa2 18.♖f6.

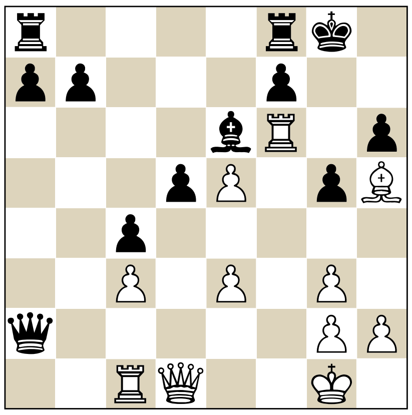
17.dxe5 ♗e6 18.♗h5



18...♕xa2

There's no other good choice for Black. The kingside has already been weakened, and it's time to launch a counterattack. Trying to play it safe will not do: 18...b5 19.♖f6 ♔g7 20.♕f3 ♕c7 21.♖f1 ♕xe5 22.h3! (after 22.♗xf7 Black has 22...g4! 23.♕f2 ♗xf7 24.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 25.♕xf7+ ♔h8, and White has achieved nothing) 22...♕c7, and although Black is a pawn up, there's nothing I can do but wait, while White just reinforces her position.

19.♖f6



19...♕b2!

A tenacious move! During the game I felt very uncomfortable about this

Tirana 2011

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	Hou Yifan	IGM	CHN	2578	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	.	.	5½	2741
2	Humpy Koneru	IGM	IND	2600	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	.	.	2½	2437

Hou Yifan World Champion after 8 rounds

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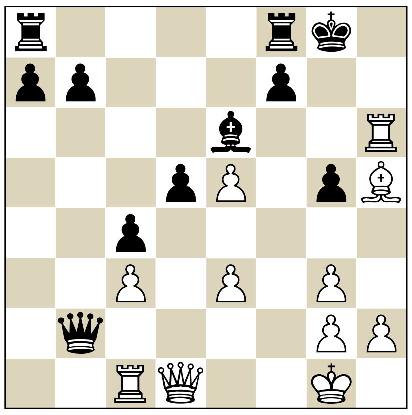
position, which is why I spent almost 30 minutes here. First of all I thought up a plan: to defend the h6 pawn, to move the queen back to c7 to attack e5, and to protect the second rank. But if I allow White to play ♕f3 and ♖f1 and to move all her pieces to attack f7, Black will face a hard time: 19...♕a5 20.♕f3 ♕c7 21.♖f1 ♕xe5 22.♗xf7+ ♗xf7 23.♖xf7 ♖xf7 24.♕xf7+ ♔h8 25.h3.

20.♖xh6?!

The most natural move. Both players possibly missed a powerful plan here: 20.h4! (in order to weaken the g5 pawn and to create a safe place for the white king, and then at some point to move the queen to the kingside) 20...♔g7 21.♔h2 ♖ae8 22.♖c2, with a strong attack.

After 20.♖c2 ♕b6 21.♕d2 ♕c7 22.♕d4 ♕b6 the position is equal.



20...♗f5

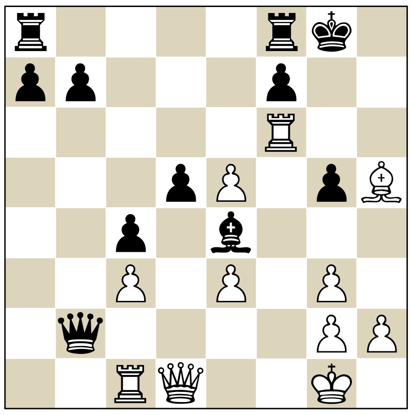
This was the main idea behind 19...♕b2: to move the bishop to the h7-b1 diagonal, after which the rook comes to e8 to capture the important e5 pawn. It's not easy for White's rook and bishop to prevent this plan.

21.♖f6

Another interesting idea was 21.♗f3 ♗g6 22.h4! (the only move, otherwise the rook would be captured) 22...♖ae8 23.♔h2 ♖xe5 24.♕d4 ♖fe8 25.hxg5! ♕xc1 26.♕h4 ♔g7 27.♖xg6+, and perpetual check.

21...♗e4

Maybe moving the bishop to d3 at once would have been better: 21...♗d3 22.e4! (22.♖f2 ♕b6) 22...dxe4 23.♖f2 ♕b6 24.♕g4 ♕e3 25.♖f1! ♗xf1 26.♕f5 ♗e2 27.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 28.♕xf7+, with perpetual check.



22.♗f3?!

The correct move was 22.♖f2, for example: 22...♕b6 23.♕d2 ♖ae8 24.♖cf1 ♖xe5 25.♖f6 ♕c5 26.♕f2, and Black has won the e5 pawn. But White's pieces are more active: 26...♗d3 27.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 28.♖xf7 ♗xf1 29.h3! ♕xe3 30.♖f8+, with a draw.

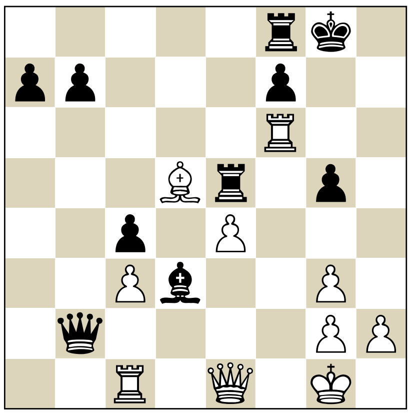
22...♗d3 23.♕e1?!

Humpy spent more than 30 minutes here, and indeed it's not easy for White to save the game, for example: 23.h4 ♖ae8 24.♗xd5 ♖xe5 25.e4 ♔g7 26.♖f2 ♕b6, and the d3 bishop is very strong and controls the important f1-square, giving Black the slightly better position.

23...♖ae8 24.♗xd5 ♖xe5 25.e4

> 'Nice homework! This time Humpy had really wonderful and sufficient opening preparation, which forced me to spend too much time in the opening.'

Hou Yifan keeps breaking records. Never before did a Women's World Champion defend her title at the age of 17.



25...♔g7?!

A normal move. In the press conference after this game, the computer found a powerful move that I had missed during the game: 25...♖d8! 26.♖f2 ♕b6 27.♗xf7+ ♔g7 28.h3 ♖xe4 29.♕d2 ♕c5 30.♔h2 ♖f8, and Black captures the bishop and is definitely winning.

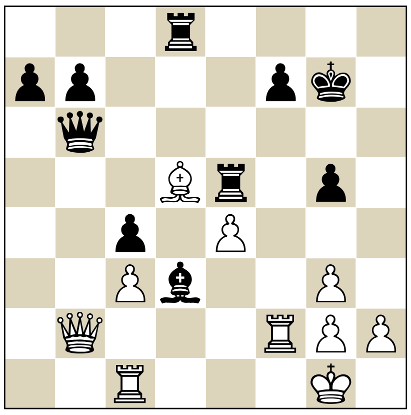
26.♖f2 ♕b6 27.♕d2

Other moves will lose on the spot: 27.♔h1 f5 or 27.g4 ♖d8.

27...♖d8 28.♕b2

Here my opponent only had a few minutes left and still had to play 12 moves. Despite her serious time-trouble she found the best way.

If 28.♔h1 then 28...♗xe4 29.♖xf7+ ♔h8, losing the bishop.

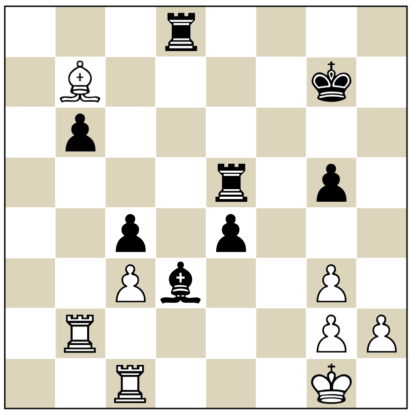


28...f5

The simplest way. Another possibility was 28...♕e3 29.h3 (or 29.♔h1 ♖d7 30.♖f3 ♕e2 31.♕xe2 ♗xe2 32.♖f2 ♗d3) 29...♗xe4 30.♗xe4 ♕xe4, which is also much better for Black.

29.♕xb6 axb6 30.♗xb7 fxe4 31.♖b2?

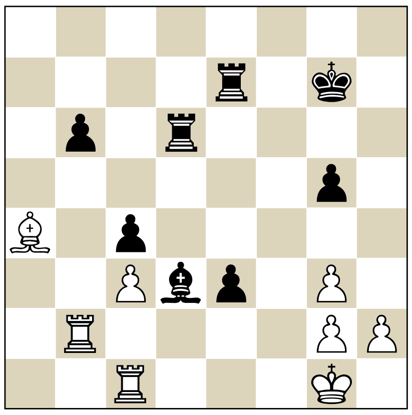
The last mistake, and one that leads to an immediate loss. The best choice here was 31.♖a2 g4!, with control of the important f3-square and a clear advantage for Black.



31...♖e7!

To drive the bishop from the a8-h1 diagonal, so that when Black pushes the e-pawn, the bishop can't go to f3.

32.♗c6 ♖d6 33.♗a4 e3



The winning move. The passed pawn decides the game.

34.♖e1 e2 35.♗c2 ♖f7 36.♗xd3 cxd3 37.♖d2 ♖df6

White resigned.

Thanks for watching ☺ ■

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Short Stories

Adding half a point to the score

Envy is a powerful emotion – indeed an entire political creed, called Socialism, was built upon its sturdy foundations – but it is not something one often experiences when surveying the contemporary chess scene. Nevertheless, I confess to feeling a twinge of jealousy when I recently learned, in New In Chess 2011/7, of Hikaru Nakamura's collaboration with my erstwhile antagonist, Garry Kasparov – thanks to the munificence of U.S. patron Rex Sinquefield. What an opportunity that must be – to study with a man who is not only probably the greatest chess player of all time, but undoubtedly its greatest theoretician.

In the same issue though, we were given an intriguing glimpse into why the highly-publicised relationship between Kasparov and his previous protégé, Magnus Carlsen, had broken down. Since his retirement from the game, Garry has become a far more emollient character, displaying hitherto unsuspected qualities such as an ability to listen and patience when dealing with others. Still, a somewhat domineering personality does not completely disappear overnight, and it is obvious that he managed to rub Magnus up the wrong way. Of course, we have not heard Garry's side of this particular story but, at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter – at least in terms of whether the correct decision was made by Magnus. In individual coaching, the player must ultimately decide. If the person being trained feels it is not working, then whether his reasoning is flawed, or his opinions harsh or unobjective, is totally irrelevant. There can be nothing further to discuss, except terms of severance.

You are never quite sure what you are going to get when you employ a coach. Price or qualifications (if any) are no guarantee of quality, which can vary enormously. Reputations are sometimes overblown. I remember once asking Etienne Bacrot how was his experience with one famous Russian IM and author. He paused for a while before replying, 'He was very good at making me work on endings'. That is an extremely important phase of the game, of course, but it was spoken in a manner that clearly indicated Etienne didn't think he was much use at anything else. Caveat emptor. The best thing to do is go by recommendations of people you trust and then judge for yourself. Having been on both sides of a coaching relationship, I know both its value and limitations.

My finest early coach was Dr. John Nunn, who first accompanied me to the World Junior Championship in Dortmund 1980. As a mathematician and author of several well-respected openings' monographs, John approached chess with an impressive logic and lucidity ideally suited to aiding my ill-disciplined, ramshackle development at that time. One day I would have nothing to play against the Caro-Kann (plus ça change...), but then John would show me a few key lines of the Panov-Botvinnik Attack, with clear explanations, in just a couple of hours. Being a fast learner, I would go to the board and, sure enough, the game would follow the analysis. Naturally, I would be required to make some respectable moves myself before bringing home the point, but starting the game from a position of strength, rather than equality, or even disadvantage, was a complete revelation.

My general rule of thumb is that if a coach can add half a point to the score of his charge during a tournament, he is doing a par job. Any more, then he can be well satisfied. While such a modest goal might shock a few readers (especially parents who might be paying good money for it), remember that is often the difference between a medal and not. Trainers can also cause damage as well as assisting. A friend of mine recently related how he played against a (locally) promising teenager at an open tournament in Greece. Foolishly the boy had been kept awake preparing until the middle of the night by his overbearing trainer. On a hunch, my friend varied from his customary 1.e4 and opened 1.b3. Surprised, but yawning unceasingly and barely able to keep his eyes open, the youngster lost feebly in just fifteen moves and was, predictably, duly berated by the culpable bully.

While I made rapid progress under Dr. Nunn's tutelage during that early phase of my career, his algorithmic personality was much less-well suited to the peculiarities of matchplay. When facing an opponent who has months to prepare for you, it is not sufficient to merely brush up your repertoire – however well-ordered it is. I discovered this to my cost, in 1988, when I was unexpectedly eliminated from the Candidates' quarterfinal by Jon Speelman. My defeat was hardly the fault of my algebraic topologist second – far from it – but the conclusion I drew from this exceedingly painful lesson was that I needed a more cunning, rounded, psychological approach to succeeding in the World Championship cycle. For all his indisputable analytical talents, it was clear that John could not help me in this respect. I would have to find someone else or, better still, solve it myself.

Blessed is he who does not acquire the flaws, as well as the strengths, from his coach. Alas, this process is almost inevitable – especially on a junior level. The most obvious manifestation of this is in the opening repertoire. As a kid, I had a few lessons from the Lancashire junior coach Mike Conroy. One of the abominations he imposed upon me was the Morra Gambit. Despite IM Lawrence Trent's protestations to the contrary, a belief in the existence of Santa Claus is more rational than imagining White has adequate compensation after the unwarranted 3.c3? Unfortunately I persisted with this imbecilic variation, with poor results, before finally abandoning it forever after being trounced by Karpov in a clock simul in 1977.

In more recent years I have had the opportunity to inflict my own inanities upon students. I cannot claim to thoroughly enjoy coaching, because it is very hard work if you are even moderately conscientious. Nevertheless it does provide a degree of satisfaction – not to mention a steady income, which is why I do it occasionally.

When working with beginners it is essential to have a sound didactic methodology. Thankfully, even my weakest students have been fairly accomplished players, which allows for a less rigid and more individually tailored approach. A good coach has to be like a doctor and accurately diagnose his patient's ailments before prescribing any medicine. It is therefore probably an unpardonable breach of the Hippocratic Oath to mention what I consider to be my biggest success, but being horribly indiscrete, I shall do so anyway. From 2006-7 I was working as trainer for the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the end of one of my sessions, of roughly a fortnight's duration, I was approached by Shirin Navabi, a then 26 year-old, 2070 rated, former national women's champion, asking for advice. She said she had a month free from university and wanted to work on her game. She felt very unhappy with her openings in particular. I replied that, of course, her openings could be improved – which was true of all of us – but that she would derive greater benefit from working on her tactics. Her strategic understanding was pretty good, but she had a tendency to overlook combinations. I was leaving Tehran the next day, but before I departed, I set her a course of tactics – including some endings, which are often pure calculation anyway – and told her to put in two hours daily, writing down her answers. She followed this advice faithfully and, at the end of the month, went off to play in the Dubai Open. Unfortunately the tournament ended disappointingly when she lost the final game, but nevertheless she made a brilliant 2430 performance – a whopping 360 points above her normal level, and by far the best result of her life.

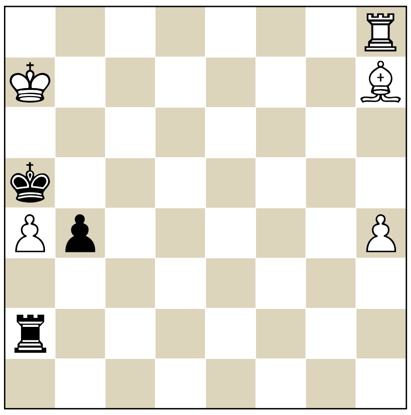
> 'A good coach has to be like a doctor and accurately diagnose his patient's ailments before prescribing any medicine.'

My last little story comes from the Asian Indoor Games in Macau 2007, when I had to cope with a despondent Elshan Moradiabadi, who had just blundered horribly in the penultimate round, blowing – as he thought – any chances for a medal. He told me he had been considering abandoning the game for a while, but this latest disaster showed the moment to quit had now finally arrived. I answered patiently that I was more than willing to sit down at length with him and discuss his retirement. In the meantime, however, the tournament wasn't over, so would he kindly just shut the fuck up, go back and try to finish his career on a good note? Elshan was not initially convinced – wallowing as he was in his own misery – but in the end he agreed to do just that. Off he trudged into the playing hall and sat down. A short while later he won his final blitz game. To the surprise of all of us, it transpired that he took the bronze medal on tie-break. Of course, four years on he is still playing. ■

‘A Sensational Experience’

Jan Timman

The Russian endgame study composer A.S. Gurvich created a famous miniature in which a mating net is woven around the black king in a surprising way.



Gurvich, ‘Shakhmatnaya Moskva’ 1959
White to play and win

It seems like an impossible task. White’s a-pawn is very hard to protect, whereas Black has a strong passed pawn. However, the position contains a subtle combination.

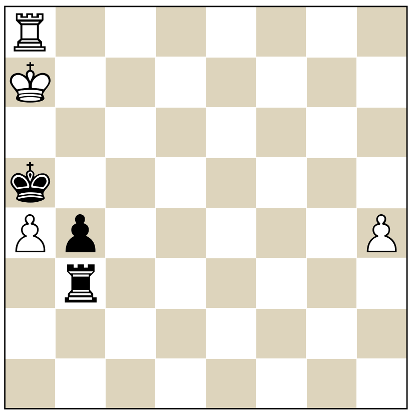
1.♗g8! ♖b2

The a-pawn was taboo on account of mate in one.

2.♗b3!!

Blocking the black b-pawn.

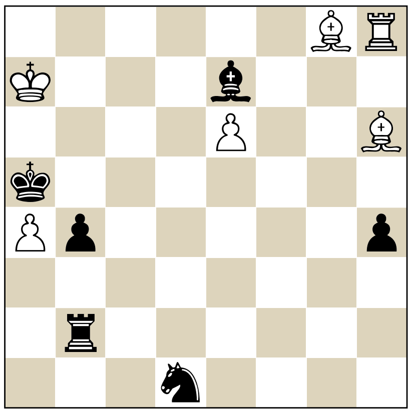
2...♖xb3 3.♖a8!



The point of the bishop sacrifice.

3...♔xa4 4.♔b6 mate**.**

Interestingly, this mating net can also be constructed if Black has much more material.



Timman 2011
White to play and win (after Gurvich)

Material is equal. White has the bishop pair and a strong passed pawn, but the black pawns aren’t exactly harmless either. White has to act energetically, otherwise he may end up in trouble.

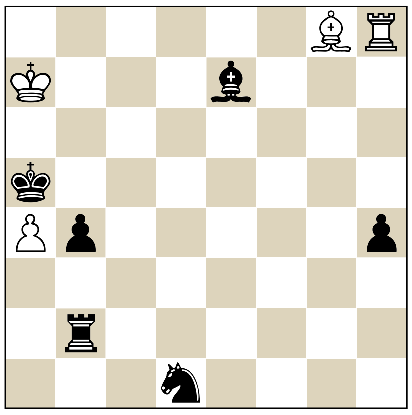
1.♗f8!!

A bishop sacrifice Black has to accept.

1...♗xf8

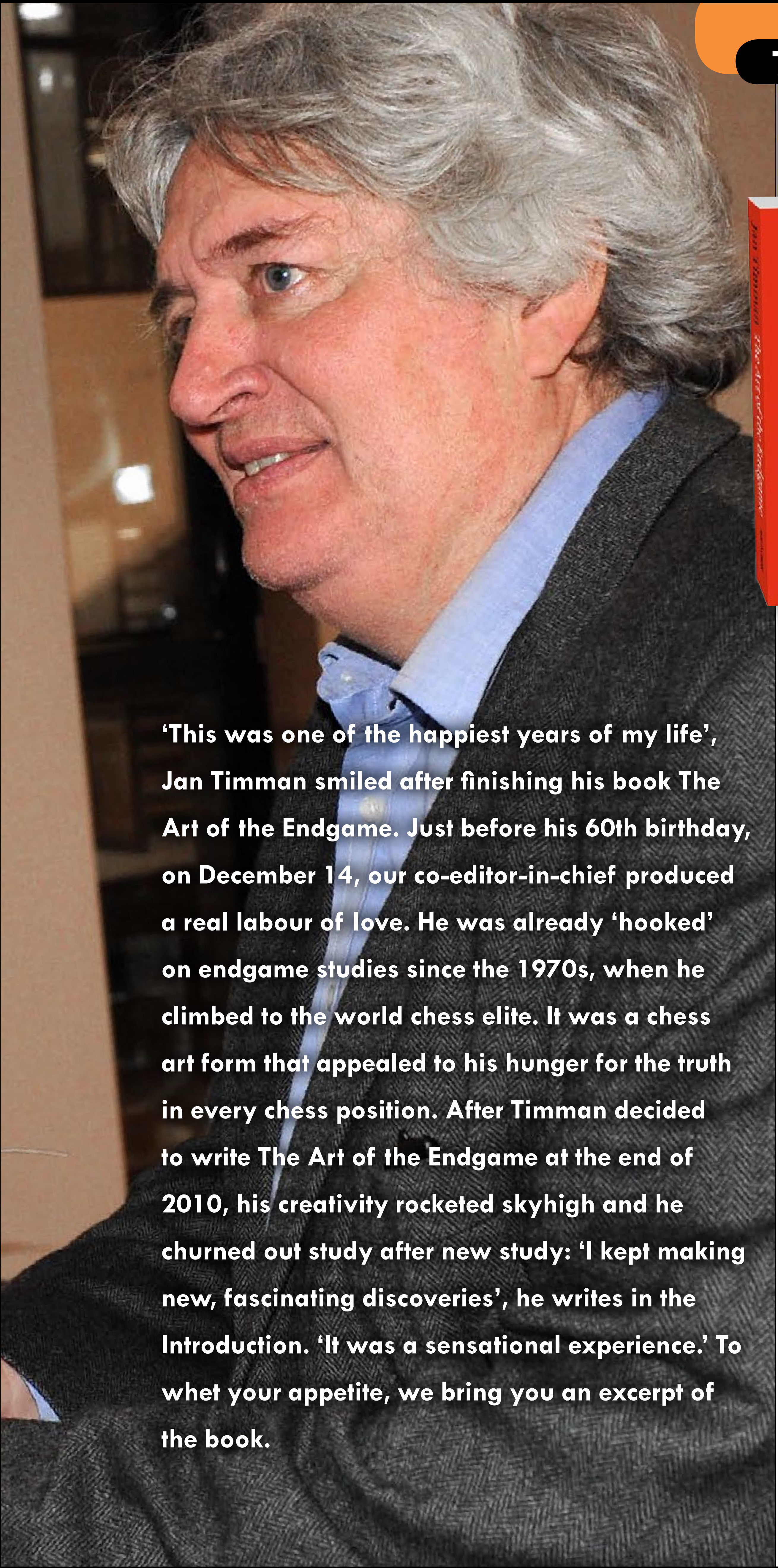
On 1...♖c2, 2.♔b7! is winning.

2.e7! ♗xe7



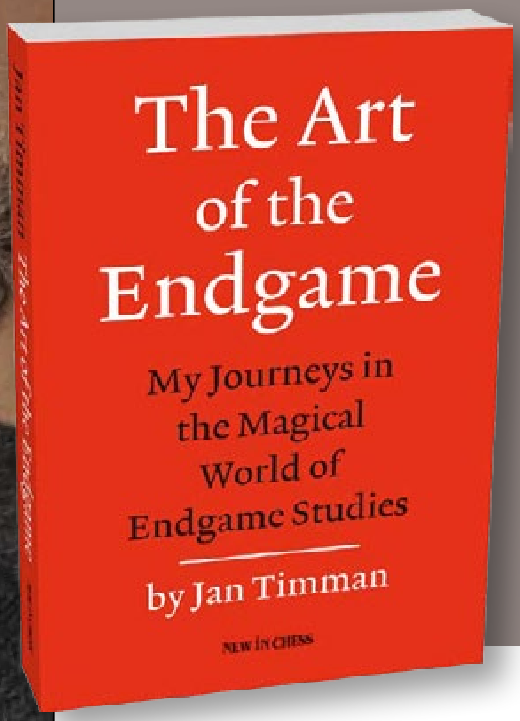
The same theme that was discussed earlier in this chapter. The starting position is again reached, but this time without the queen’s bishop and the e-pawn. So the a2-g8 diagonal has been opened for the other bishop.

3.♗b3!!



'This was one of the happiest years of my life', Jan Timman smiled after finishing his book The Art of the Endgame. Just before his 60th birthday, on December 14, our co-editor-in-chief produced a real labour of love. He was already 'hooked' on endgame studies since the 1970s, when he climbed to the world chess elite. It was a chess art form that appealed to his hunger for the truth in every chess position. After Timman decided to write The Art of the Endgame at the end of 2010, his creativity rocketed skyhigh and he churned out study after new study: 'I kept making new, fascinating discoveries', he writes in the Introduction. 'It was a sensational experience.' To whet your appetite, we bring you an excerpt of the book.

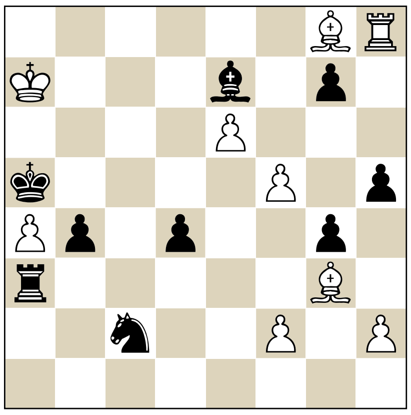
NEW IN CHESS


The Art of the Endgame
My Journeys in the Magical World of Endgame Studies
by Jan Timman
NEW IN CHESS
Jan Timman The Art of the Endgame

Gurvich's bishop sacrifice turns out to be equally effective here.

3...♖xb3 4.♖a8! ♔xa4 5.♔b6 mate.

The study has gained in content with the extra sacrifices. But still Gurvich's study is better, because it shows the brilliant idea in all its simplicity. In my study, the fact that the black knight doesn't move is especially annoying. Therefore I decided to make a study in which Gurvich's mating position features in a side variation.



Timman 2011
White to play and win

Here Black's passed pawns are even more dangerous.

1.f6! The intention of this pawn sacrifice will soon become clear.

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1...gxf6 2.♗d6!!

The well-known bishop sacrifice. After 2...♗xd6 3.e7! ♗xe7 4.♗b3!! Black would get mated in the way that we have already seen. However, he has a better defence.

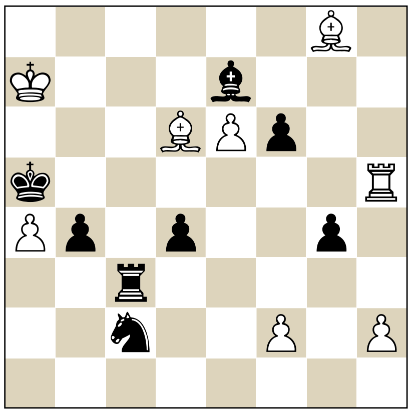
By the way, after 2.♖h7 ♗f8 3.e7 ♗xe7 4.♖xe7 ♖c3 Black would have sufficient counterplay.

2...♖c3!

Now the battle will revolve around the square e7.

3.♖xh5+

Now the intention of the pawn sacrifice becomes clear.



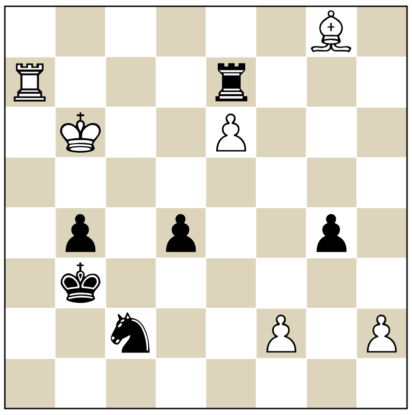
3...f5!

Black also sacrifices his f-pawn. After 3...♔xa4 4.♗xe7 ♖c7+ 5.♔b6 ♖xe7 6.♖h7 he would have been left without a chance.

4.♖xf5+ ♔xa4 5.♗xe7 ♖c7+ 6.♔b6 ♖xe7 7.♖a5+

Necessary in order to break the blockade on e7. Insufficient for the win was 7.♔c5, as becomes clear from the following variation: 7...d3 8.♖d5 ♖e8 9.♖f5 ♖c8+ 10.♔b6 b3 11.e7 b2 12.♖a5+ ♔b4 13.♖b5+ ♔c3 14.♖b3+ ♔d2 15.♖xb2 ♔c1, followed by 16...d2, and White cannot win.

7...♔b3 8.♖a7



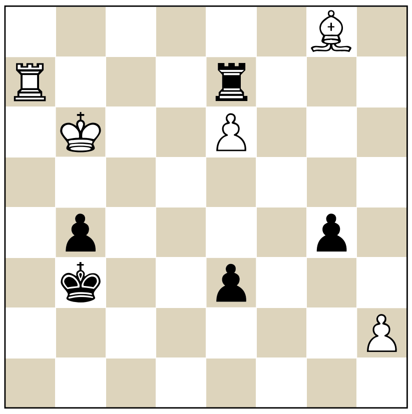
It looks as if White wins comfortably, but Black has a fantastic resource:

8...♘e3!

Indirectly protecting the rook. White has to take the knight.

9.fxe3 dxe3

An interesting situation. If White takes the rook, the black pawn will queen undisturbed, after which he draws easily.



10.♖c7!!

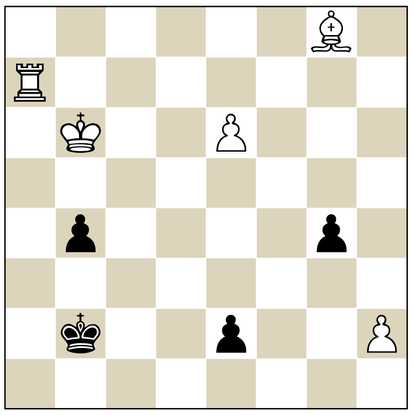
A very strong move. The black king is cut off and can therefore not support the e-pawn.

10...♔a3

Black wants to march on with the b-pawn. Now 11.♖c1 would be insufficient for the win due to 11...b3 12.♖e1 b2 13.♖xe3+ ♔a2. After White has been forced to give his rook for the b-pawn, the black king marches to the kingside, just in time to conquer the white h-pawn.

However, White has a hidden trick up his sleeve.

11.♖xe7! e2 12.♖a7+ ♔b2

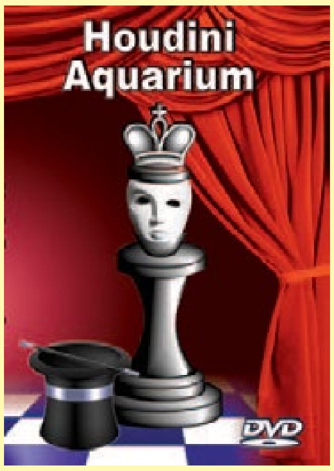


13.♖a2+!

With this rook sacrifice White forces the passage of his e-pawn with check.

13...♔xa2 14.e7+ And wins. ■

New! HOUDINI 2



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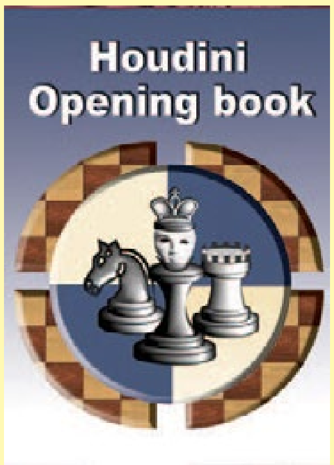

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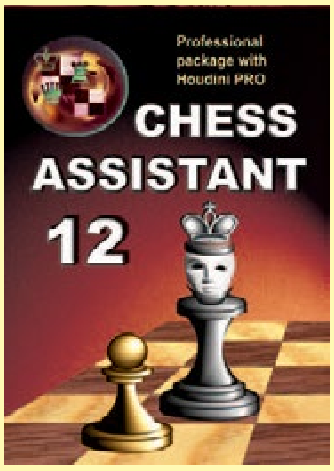

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Favourites fail as Germans go for gold

Sunny Greece. Sirtaki. Ouzo. Mousaka. Traditional hospitality. Myths and legends. The Acropolis. You'd think it would be difficult to name a more positive country, but no. Literally on the eve of the European Team Championship, events unfolded with kaleidoscopic speed. A crisis spiralling out of control. Protests. Strikes. The resignation of the government. In the face of all this chaos, **Victor Bologan**, Board 1 for Moldova and our intrepid reporter, was completely sure of one thing: that nothing threatened the championship in Porto Carras. And he was right.

How to get there was another matter. Moldova hasn't been to the European Team Championships for the past 19 years and probably won't go again for the same number of years. But this time we made it, either because it was becoming hard to do without the Greek coast in autumn, or because our Minister of sport started liking chess, or for some other reason. In fact, the deadline for entering the event had already passed, but thanks to the organizers I realized at the very last moment that this year I would be part of this European chess festival! Which I don't regret at all, as the show was excellent and the setting was incomparable. Like a space ship that jettisons its booster rockets as it gathers speed, the 18th European Team Championships shot down the candidates for the prizes one after another, so that in the end it could launch into orbit the team from... but about that a little later ☺.

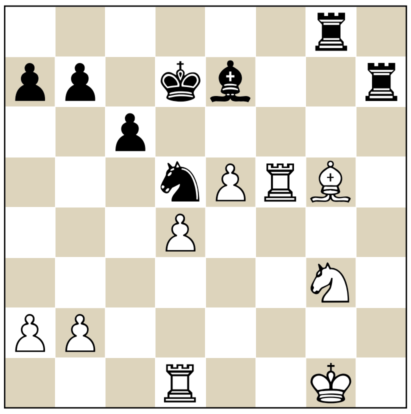
There are different ways to get into 'playing form'. Smooth and sharp methods. In my case it was the shock method. Three days before the start of the tournament I had a cast on my

Germany, the European champions no one had predicted. (L. to r.) Uwe Bönsch (coach), Arkadij Naiditsch, Rustam Kasimdzhanov ('miracle worker'), Jan Gustafsson, Daniel Fridman, Rainer Buhmann and Georg Meier.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

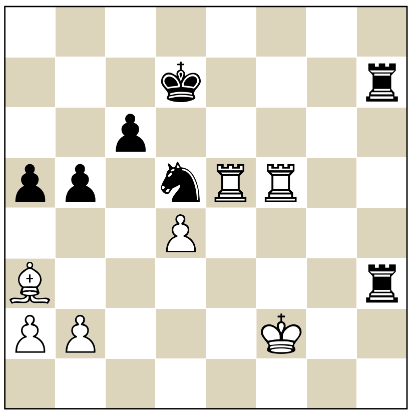
leg, and three days later it had been removed so that I'd have the chance to greet the winner of the 2011 World Cup on just one crutch (instead of the two I had initially).

Playing the ratings favourite in the first round has the advantage that nothing is expected of you. In general nothing was expected of me. Which made the situation all the more striking when in the fourth hour of play in the Russia-Moldova match it seemed that an easy win for the Russians was turning into a defeat. The 'bewitching' play of their leaders Grischuk and Morozevich wasn't anywhere to be seen as their own positions went from big advantages and corresponding wins to draws, while Peter Svidler turned a slightly worse position in mutual time trouble into a losing one:



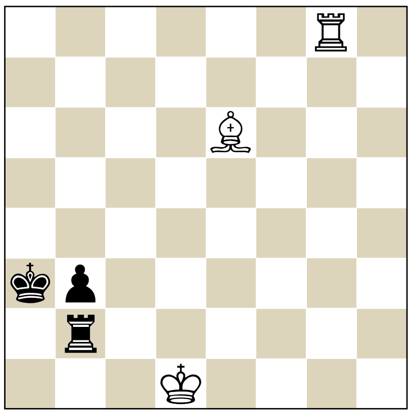
Svidler-Bologan
Porto Carras 2011 (1)
position after 34...♖g8

35.e6+
In mutual time-trouble, in a hopeless position the World Cup winner exploits his last practical chance – giving his opponent the opportunity to choose.
35...♔xe6?!
With fewer minutes on his clock, I only managed to ponder that on 35...♔e8 he plays 36.♖f7, but I also didn't want to leave the e6 pawn alive. However, the simple 35...♔c7 36.♖xd5 ♗xg5 37.♖xg5 ♖xg5 38.♔g2 ♖g6 won.
36.♖e1+ ♔d7 37.♗xe7 ♖xg3+ 38.♔f2 ♖gh3 39.♗a3 b5 40.♖ee5 a5



To be honest I also evaluated this position as won, but Svidler had already switched on his survival system at full power.
41.♗c5! ♖h2+ 42.♔f3 ♖xb2?
Instead, 42...♖7h3+ 43.♔g4 ♘e3+ 44.♖xe3 ♖xe3 45.♖f7+ ♔d8 46.♖a7 ♖xb2 47.♖xa5 ♖g2+ preserved definite winning chances.
Now White found the counterplay associated with his next move.
43.♖f8 ♖bh2
Here I could no longer find anything, and there probably wasn't anything.
44.♖a8 ♖f7+ 45.♔g3 ♘c7 46.♖xa5 ♖h8 47.♖g5 ♖a8 Draw.

If on the first day the most popular question of the tournament was, what's wrong with your leg, then after the match with Russia everyone was asking, what happened to Dmitry Svetushkin?

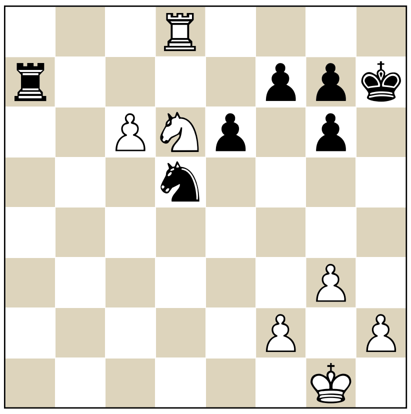


Morozevich-Svetushkin
Porto Carras 2011 (1)
position after 76.♖g8

> 'Chess is a game above all, and not a collection of analyses and ratings.'

By this point everything had already been shown and proven, there was a dead draw on the board, and I don't even think that Morozevich was hoping for a miracle, he was just playing out the necessary 50 moves. But a miracle happened nevertheless...
76...♖g2?? 77.♖xg2
Black resigned.

I'll reply with Kasparov's words after his loss to Korotylev at a Moscow blitz tournament in the mid-'90s. It's a mystery! And although Russia managed to eke out a laboured victory, an unpleasant aftertaste from their play still remained. And if the first bell that rang for the Russian team in the match with Moldova turned out to be just an alarm, the second and third ones that rang after their matches with Bulgaria and Azerbaijan really were reminiscent of funeral motifs. The phenomenon of the play by the Russian men's team in the past decade is a serious topic for discussion in the coaches' council of the Russian Chess Federation, and I can only point out the obvious constraint of some members of the Russian team. Chess is a game above all, and not a collection of analyses and ratings. A game in which there's always an element of risk. Take the Russia-Holland match, for example: out of four games only two were really played, of which one was as Black in the classical Spanish and one was a better endgame for Karjakin as White. It's difficult to win a match with one game. It's doubly difficult for the person who's playing it. It was with this psychological burden falling on him that Sergey Karjakin failed to cope with the responsibility.



Karjakin-Smeets
Porto Carras 2011 (3)
position after 36...♖a7

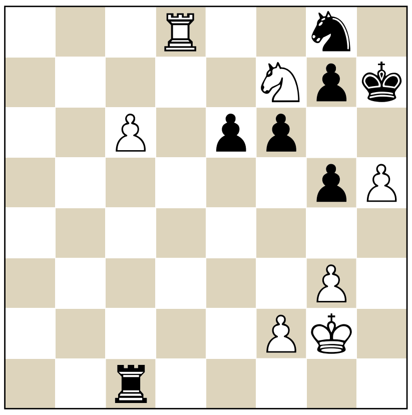
37.h4
First Sergey misses an elementary win: 37.♖d7 ♖a6 38.♘xf7 ♖xc6 39.♖d8 ♖c1+ 40.♔g2 g5 41.♘xg5+ ♔g6 42.♘xe6 and wins.

37...f6
37...g5!? looks more interesting.

38.♘b5 ♖a1+ 39.♔g2 ♖c1 40.♘d6
40.c7 only leads to a draw: 40…♘xc7 41.♖c8 ♖c5 42.♘xc7 ♖c3 43.♔f1 ♖c2 44.♔e1 e5 45.♔f1 ♖c3 46.♔e2 e4 47.g4 f5 48.♔d2 ♖c4 49.♔e3 ♖c2.

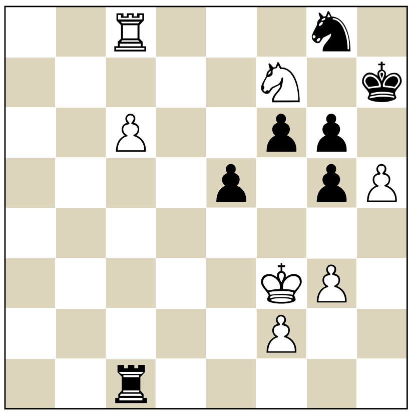
40...g5 41.h5! Not letting the black king out of the mating net.

41...♘e7 42.♘f7 ♘g8
And here you either had to calculate, or evaluate, or just guess where White should put the rook. It was hard to calculate to the end, so from general considerations a rook on c8 more logically pins down the g8 knight, and with it also the whole of Black's kingside.



43.♖d6?!
Lets go of part of his advantage.
The right plan was 43.♖c8! g4! 44.c7 (after improving his position as much as possible, White prepares for the arrival of the white king on the queenside) 44...e5 45.♔h2 ♖c3 46.♔g1 ♖c1+ 47.♔g2 ♖c2 48.♔f1 e4 49.♔e1 ♖c3 50.♔d2 ♖d3+ 51.♔e2 ♖c3 52.♘d6 ♘e7 53.♘b5! and wins.

43...e5 44.♔f3 ♘e7 45.♖d8 ♘g8 46.♖c8 g6



47.♖c7 He should have tried 47.g4 gxh5 48.gxh5 ♘h6 49.♘d6 f5 50.♖c7+ ♔g8 51.♔e2 g4 52.♔d2 ♖c5 53.♖c8+ ♔h7 54.c7 ♖d5+ 55.♔e2 ♖xd6 56.♖a8 ♖c6 57.c8♕ ♖xc8 58.♖xc8 with good winning chances.

47...gxh5 48.♖d7 ♔g6 49.c7 ♔f5 50.♘d8 ♖c3+ 51.♔g2 h4 52.g4+ ♔xg4 53.♘b7 ♔f5 54.♖g7 ♔e6 55.♘d8+ ♔f5 56.♘b7 ♔e6 57.♘d8+ ♔f5 58.♘b7 ♔e6 Draw.

If Sergey had gone 37.♖d7 everything could have unfolded differently for Russia. What I'm talking about is a situation where the first two boards have agreed a draw, the boards are crammed with pieces, and the computer accurately indicates a microscopic plus for the Russians. He who doesn't risk doesn't drink the cham-

VLADIMIR BARSKY

Round 1: Peter Svidler (Russia) faces Victor 'What's wrong with your leg?' Bologan (Moldova).

EURO
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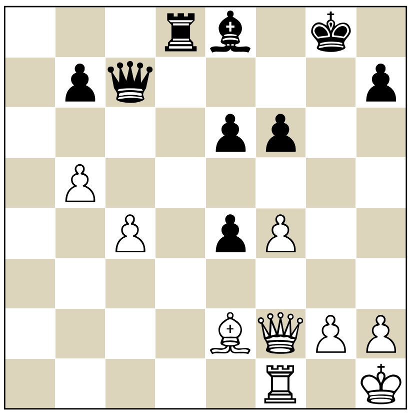
While the Russian men came not even close to winning, the Russian women added another glistening trophy to their collection.

pagne! By the way, at the next championship this situation will become impossible due to the 40-move rule that was accepted at the Assembly of the European Chess Union held in Porto Carras, during which time you won't be allowed to offer your opponent a draw.

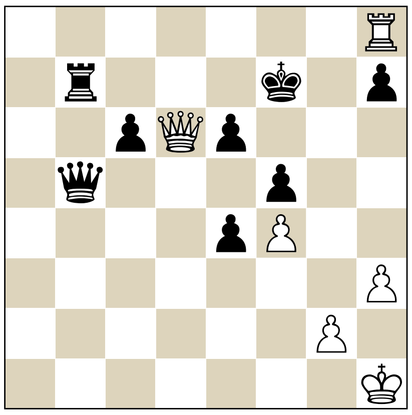
And although towards the end the Russians woke up from their lethargy, getting three victories in a row against the teams from Spain, France and Slovenia, the train had already left the station. Fifth place. Consolation in the form of three medals... for individual achievement, so it's best to talk about the enormous potential that Russia might one day possibly turn into something team-oriented.

The teams from Ukraine, France and England can definitely be included on the losers' list. Such was the format of the tournament that after a loss you had a good chance of getting the Russian team, and in the last round at the 50-percent mark the pairing Ukraine-England could very well have occurred. The only bright spot in that situation was the superb play by Michael Adams, 6½ out of 9, a 2844 rating performance and first place on first board! The decider for determining the winner on first board was his game against Ivanchuk in the last round.



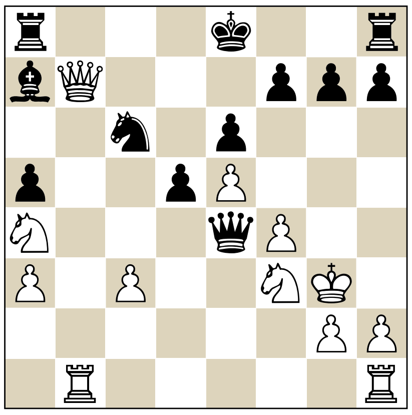
Adams-Ivanchuk
Porto Carras 2011 (9)
position after 25...♖xd8

Methodically, move by move, Michael prepared to create a distant passed pawn.
26.c5 f5 27.♗c4 ♗f7 28.h3 ♖c8 29.c6!
Although the computer prefers 29.♖d1, I like the human 29.c6 more.
29...bxc6 30.b6 ♕e7 31.♕b2 ♖b8 32.♖a1 ♕c5 33.b7! ♕xc4 34.♕e5 All forced. **34...♖xb7 35.♖a8+ ♗e8 36.♖xe8+ ♔f7 37.♖h8** An only move, but enough for a win.
37...♕b5 38.♕d6



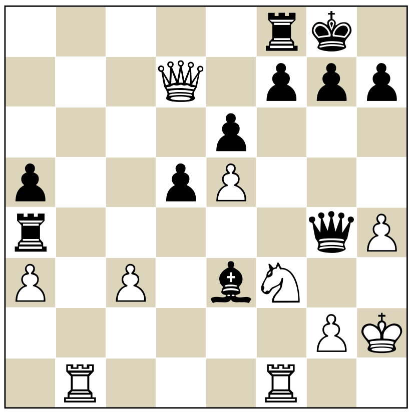
38...♕b4 Loses immediately. A more stubborn response is 38...♕b2 39.♕f8+ ♔g6 40.♕e8+ ♔f6 41.♖f8+ ♔g7 42.♖g8+ ♔f6 43.♕f8+ ♖f7 44.♕d8+ ♖e7 45.♖f8+ ♔g6 46.♔h2!! (a stylish quiet move) 46...♕b7 47.♖g8+ ♔f6 48.♕d4+ e5 49.fxe5+ ♔f7 50.♕c4+ ♖e6 51.♖h8 ♔g7 52.♖xh7+ ♔xh7 53.♕xe6, with very likely victory.
39.♕d8 ♕b2 40.♖f8+ ♔g7 41.♖g8+ Black resigned.

The role of Cinderella in the first part of the tournament was played to perfection by the young and ambitious team from Romania. After six rounds they got to first place, and the draw gave them opponents who seemed (at that point) not to be the strongest team: Germany.



Vajda-Fridman
Porto Carras 2011 (7)
position after 21.♕b7

Once in a very similar position at the World Blitz Championship in Munich in 1994, Dreev also castled as Black against Kasparov and won the game. After the game Kasparov couldn't understand what had happened for a long time. It turned out that Dreev had managed to eat the h5 pawn in a spare moment and return his rook to h8, and then calmly castle. Here, though, everything was honest.
21...0-0! 22.♕xc6 ♗e3 23.♔h3 ♕xf4 24.♖hf1 ♕h6+ 25.♔g3 ♖ac8 26.♕d7 ♖c4 27.h4 ♕f4+ 28.♔h3 ♕g4+ 29.♔h2 ♖xa4



After winning the piece back Black preserved both his attack and his extra pawn. **30.g3 ♖xa3 31.♘g5 ♖a2+ 32.♔h1 ♖f2 33.♖xf2 ♗xf2 34.♕d6 ♕xg3** White resigned.

With this castling we can say for certain that the German machine driven by Uzbek miracle-worker Rustam Kasimdzhanov and experienced captain Uwe Bönsch was working at full power! The majority of the team was left at home during the last Olympiad, but now they had their say. They had enough strength for everyone: for Hungary, and for Ukraine, and for Azerbaijan, and for Armenia – a fantastic service record! Even Cinderella wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of that kind of team. They were just brilliant!

Besides the mentioned magician of a coach, the leader of the Germans, Arkadij Naiditsch, made an enormous contribution to the team's success: 5 out of 8, almost a 2800 rating performance, and his important knockout win as Black against Radjabov in Round 8.

NOTES BY

Arkadij Naiditsch

RE 17.3 – A09
Teimour Radjabov
Arkadij Naiditsch
Porto Carras 2011 (8)

The magical date of 11.11.2011 will forever find its place in the history of German chess, and especially in the minds of the five members of the national team: Arkadij Naiditsch, Georg Meier, Daniel Fridman, Jan Gustafsson and Rainer Buhmann. At around 5.30 p.m. of that day, after five and a half hours of fighting, Gustafsson managed to hold a very difficult position against Gabriel Sargissian in the match against Armenia. This draw brought our team victory over the multiple Olympiad winner, and a clear first place at the European Team Championship in Porto Carras!!

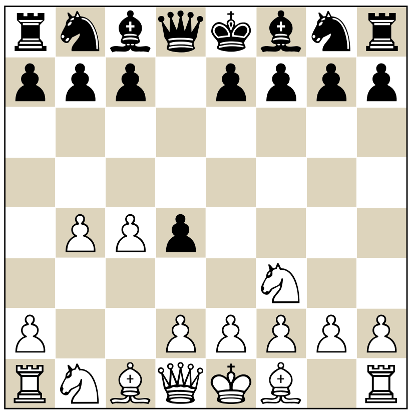
The European Championship was the strongest team competition of the season and attracted over 100 grandmasters, many of them rated over 2700. From the beginning our goal had been to finish in the Top 5 and, with some luck, perhaps to fight for the medals. As the event progressed, the team was playing very solid chess. In total we only lost two games in 9 matches and in my opinion deservedly won the championship. People might say we were lucky from time to time or that some teams underestimated us. However, the key to our success was the fantastic combination of team spirit, good atmosphere, and our '6th board', our coach Rustam Kasimdzhanov. The following game was very important for the final result. We managed to beat the big favourites and the tournament leaders at that point, the team of Azerbaijan. This was a big step in the direction of the medals.

1.♘f3 d5

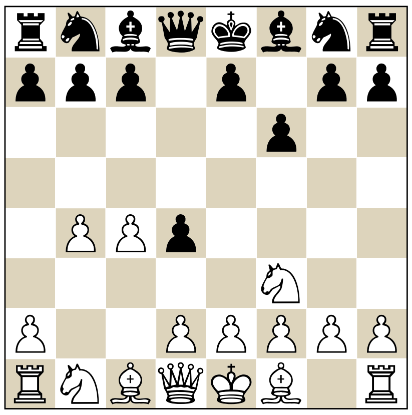
I guess my first move came as a small surprise for my opponent. I usually play 1...♘f6 or 1...c5.

2.c4 d4 And here I am already sure that my opponent was very surprised. I have never played this before. Radjabov had probably expected me to continue 2...e6 in order to return to my normal repertoire.

3.b4



3...f6! This is the main move here and to my mind the strongest. A possible other option is 3...c5. I was pretty lucky to know this quite rare line, because I have started to play 1.c4, 1.d4 and 1.♘f3 as White more often lately. In my game against Christian Bauer (Mulhouse 2011) I played 3.e3 (being afraid to play 3.b4 because of the answer 3...f6), but also got a quite dubious position. So I was very curious during the game what Radjabov had actually prepared against it, as he played 3.b4 very quickly.



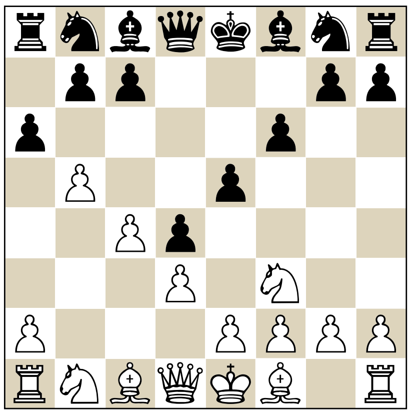
4.d3? This move is simply bad. I think that Black is already better after it, and we have only played 4 moves! The main move is 4.e3, when play can continue 4...e5 5.c5 (on 5.exd4 Black can go 5...e4) 5...a5 6.♗c4 (clearly the only move to fight for something; after 6.♘xe5 fxe5 7.♕h5+ ♔d7 8.♕f5+ ♔e8 9.♕h5+ it seems to be a draw, but here Kramnik started to play for a win with 9...♔e7 10.♕xe5+ ♗e6 11.♗c4, with unclear play, in Van Wely-Kramnik, Nice Amber rapid 2008) 6...axb4 (after 6...dxe3 7.fxe3 axb4 8.d4 ♘c6 9.0-0 ♘a5 10.♘xe5 ♘xc4 11.♘xc4 White was doing better in Kramnik-Aronian, Moscow blitz 2009) 7.♗b2 ♗xc5 8.♘xd4 ♘e7 9.♘e6 ♗xe6 10.♗xe6 ♕d3, and Black was doing very well in Chuchelov-Schenk, Germany Bundesliga 2009/10.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

On first board Arkadij Naiditsch (r.) and Teimour Radjabov make the first moves in the key match between Germany and the leaders at that point, Azerbaijan.

4...e5 5.b5 a6!

A logical and good move.



6.bxa6 Again not the best decision; this gives Black very easy and comfortable play. Better was 6.g3 axb5 7.cxb5 ♗b4+ (7...♘e7 leads to an unclear position after 8.♗g2 ♘d5 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.e3 dxe3 11.fxe3 0-0 12.♘h4) 8.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9.♘bxd2 ♘e7 10.♗g2 ♘d5 11.♕c2 ♗e6 12.0-0 0-0, with a black edge.

6...♘xa6

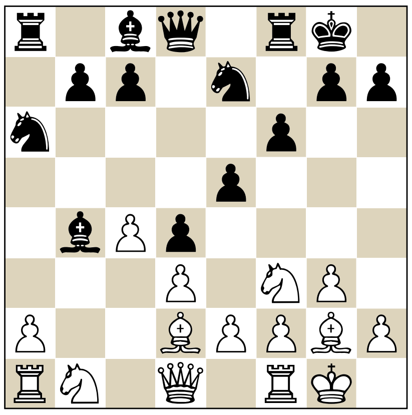
Here I had the very pleasant choice between taking with the knight or with the rook, in both cases with a stable advantage.

6...♖xa6 leads to a good set-up for Black after 7.g3 ♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9.♘bxd2 ♘e7 10.♗g2 0-0 11.0-0 c5 12.♘b3 b6 13.a4 ♘bc6.

7.g3 ♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♘e7

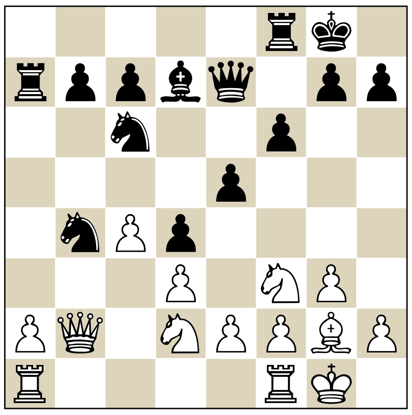
Of course it doesn't make sense to take 8...♗xd2+ 9.♘bxd2, and the white knight will go to b3.

9.♗g2 0-0 10.0-0



Here I had to decide whether I was going to play ...c5 or not. Both are possible, but I decided on the more flexible structure without ...c5, which gives me the extra idea of playing my knight via c5 and a4 to c3.

10...♗d7 11.♗xb4 ♘xb4 12.♕b3 ♘ec6 13.♘bd2 ♕e7 14.♕b2 ♖a7

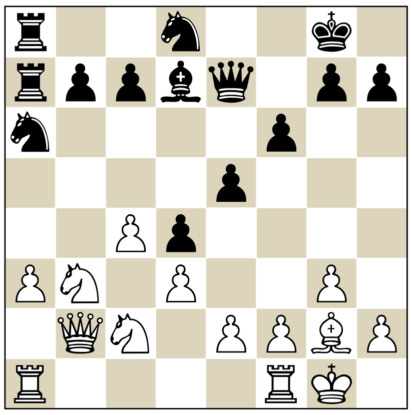


White has one weakness, the a-pawn, so I have to put maximum pressure on it.

15.♘b3 ♖fa8 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♘e1 ♘d8

Now if I manage to play ...♘e6 and ...♘ac5 the position will be almost winning, but I will not be in time! Maybe the plan with the immediate ...c5 was better anyway.

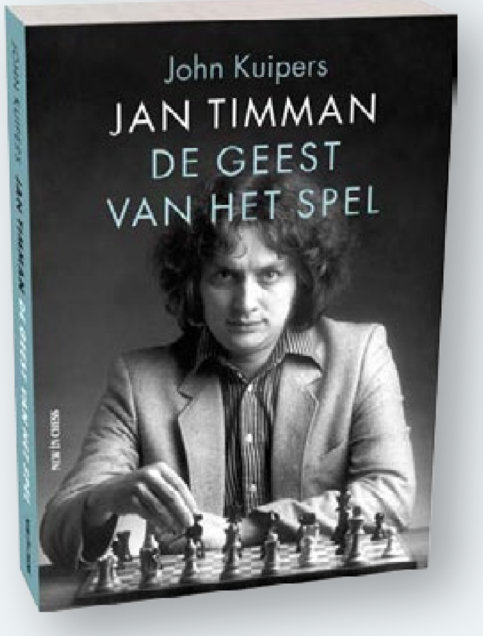
18.♘c2



Up to this point I had been quite happy with my play, and of course my original intention was to play 18...♗a4 (fighting against the move e3), but now I saw that White could try to play 19.e3 anyway, with a much more unclear position. So I started to search for other moves... It seems that White can play 19.e3 almost against any move.

18...♗c6

Indeed, 18...c5 can be met by 19.e3, and so can 18...♗a4, for instance 19.e3 ♗xb3 20.♕xb3 ♘c5 21.♕b4! (after 21.♕b1 dxe3 22.♘xe3 ♘de6 Black



'Ik trof in die jaren Hein Donner eens in de wandelgangen van het IBM-toernooi. Behalve hij en ik was er op dat moment niemand aanwezig. Hij liep daar met een sigaret, hield halt, nam nog een laatste trek en trapte toen zijn sigaret uit op het tapijt. Hij keek me daarbij veelbetekenend aan. Dat vond ik heel goed, dat trok me heel erg aan. Ik stond stil, keek naar Donner en dacht: ja, het is goed om beroepsschaker te zijn, dan doe je gewoon zulke dingen. Andere mensen doen dat niet.'

Jan Timman, De Geest van het Spel, biografie door John Kuipers • paperback 256 pagina's • € 24,50 • een NEW IN CHESS-publicatie

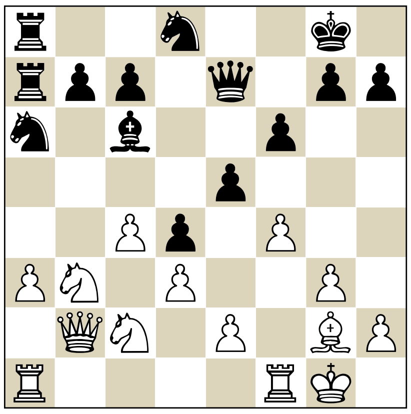
is much better) 21...♖a4 22.♕e1, and White has solved almost all his problems.

And the same goes for 18...♘e6, when after 19.e3 ♘ac5 20.♘xc5 ♘xc5 21.exd4 ♘xd3 22.♕c3 White will take over.

19.f4!

Very strong! Just when I thought I had covered everything, Teimour finds a good way to develop some play for White.

Here 19.e3 was less good, as after 19...♗xg2 20.♔xg2 dxe3 21.fxe3 ♘f7 Black is slightly better.

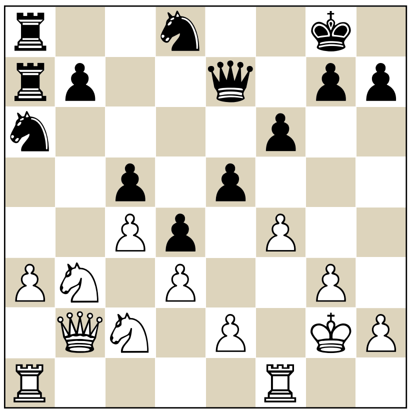


19...♗xg2

Taking on f4 is dubious: 19...exf4?! 20.♘cxd4 (20.♗xc6 ♘xc6 21.♘cxd4 is probably also fine for White) 20...fxg3 21.♘f5 gxh2+ 22.♔xh2, and White has excellent play for the pawn.

20.♔xg2 c5

Of course, I am trying to keep everything closed. In case I manage to achieve that goal, Black will be much better, but the question is, will I be able...?

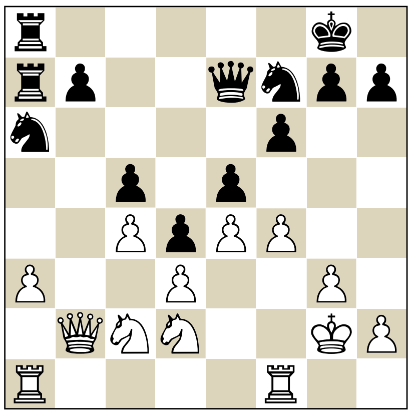


21.e4?

In my opinion this is a big strategic mistake. Teimour is going for his favourite King's Indian structures, but I think that here, with only two knights left and no bishop pair, White's position is simply bad.

Here 21.e3! was a very hard move to make at the board, but it was probably his best chance: 21...b5! (after 21...exf4 22.♖xf4 dxe3 23.♖e4 ♕d7 24.♘xe3 ♕xd3 25.♖e8+ ♔f7 26.♖d1 ♕xd1 27.♘xd1 ♔xe8 28.♘c3 the position is very unclear) 22.cxb5 ♕b7+ 23.♔g1 ♕xb5 24.fxe5 fxe5 25.♕a2 ♘f7, and Black is only slightly better.

21...♘f7 22.♘d2



At this point it was important to decide how and where to regroup my pieces. It is clear that White will close the centre with f5, and try to launch an attack with g4, h4, g5 etc.

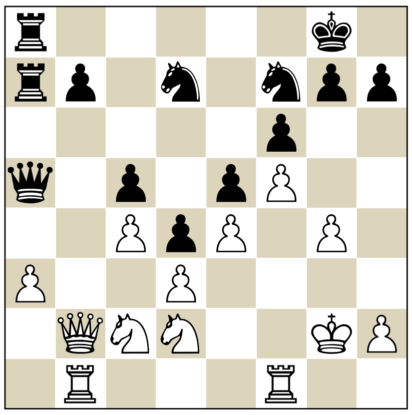
What is my plan? Should I bring my king to e7 or is it better to keep it on h8? Should I play the stopping move ...h6, which could also be a possible future weakness? Many questions; and the problem was that all these ideas seem to give Black nice play.

So, to begin with I decided to regroup my knights. The squares d7 and d6 seem to be perfect for them. They will protect the kingside while preparing the push ...b5 and in some cases the pawn on b7.

22...♘b8! 23.f5 ♘d7 24.g4 ♕d8!

Clearly, the queen's place is not on e7 but on a5, where it will be multifunctional: supporting the push ...b5 and attacking the knight on d2, and at some point maybe a move like ...♕c3 could be very useful for Black if White managed to develop a strong attack.

25.♖ab1 ♕a5



26.♘f3 ♘d6 27.♔h1

If 27.g5, Black replies 27...fxg5.

27...♖a6

Here the rook is just excellently placed. Black wants to play ...♖b6 and in case of g5, the rook on a6 will always have highly important protective possibilities on the 6th rank.

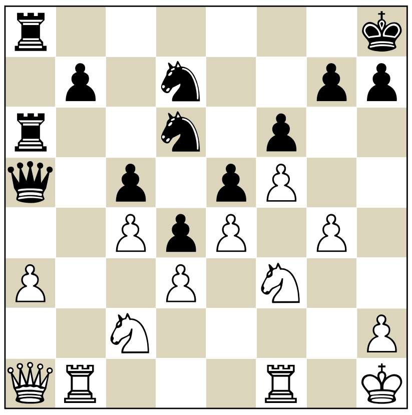
28.♕a1

White has to try and keep both his rooks on the board, which is his only chance to develop some attack on the kingside. After 28.g5 ♖b6 29.♕a1 ♖xb1 30.♖xb1 fxg5 Black has a sizeable advantage.

28...♔h8

A slightly dangerous move, but it seems to be OK.

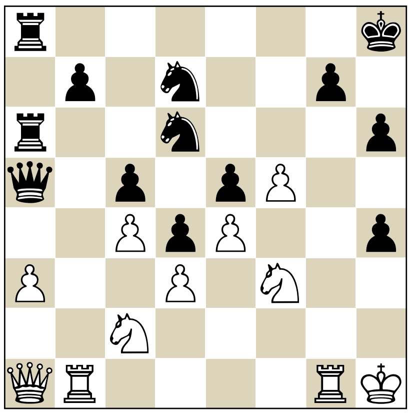
More cautious would have been 28...h6 29.h4 ♔f7 30.g5 hxg5 31.hxg5 ♖h8+ 32.♔g2 ♖b6, when Black's position is very safe and it is clear that only Black is playing for a win here.



29.g5!

The correct practical decision. Secretly, I was hoping Teimour would not make this sacrifice and prepare for the idea with one more move by playing 29.♖g1, but after 29...b5! Black seems to be clearly faster.

29...fxg5 30.♖g1 h6 31.h4 gxh4



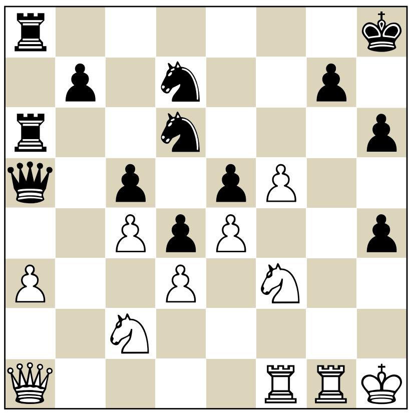
This was maybe the critical moment of the game. Can White develop an attack or not? During the game I thought that my position was looking quite safe. In the worst case I can always protect my g7 pawn by playing ...♘e8, when the a6 rook is protecting the 6th rank and the d7 knight can always go to f6. Also, White does not have all that many pieces left on the board, so not a lot of material to sacrifice if he hopes to open up the position of the black king.

All these factors gave me the feeling that, normally speaking, I should be doing very fine.

32.♖bf1?!

A strange move, followed by an even stranger draw offer. At this point only two games were still being played (following two draws): mine and Mamedyarov-Fridman, where Daniel was fighting very hard for a draw – and it was highly unclear whether he was actually going to reach it. So it took me just a few seconds before I played my next move.

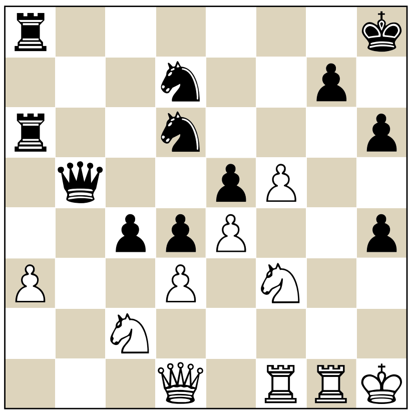
The correct move for White was 32.♖g4!, a move that I clearly underestimated during the game. My position is still much better, but I would need to find the very strong 32...♕a4! (32...b5 would be the most natural, when after 33.cxb5 ♘xb5 34.♖bg1 ♖g8 35.♕a2 ♘f6 36.♖g6 the game would be completely open) 33.♕a2, and also 33...♕c6, a great defensive manoeuvre that keeps Black on top. The computer finds it immediately, but at the board it would have been almost impossible to spot.



32...b5!

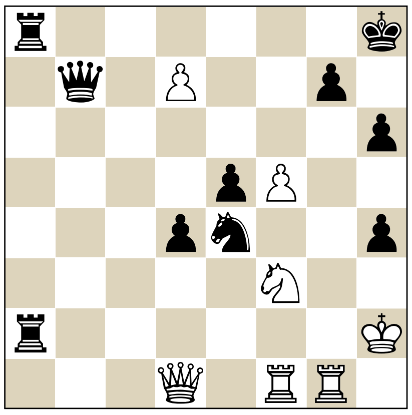
Black starts his winning breakthrough. White's structure is falling apart like a house of cards.

33.cxb5 ♕xb5 34.♕d1 c4



It seems like the game is over. Black is getting to the key pawn of White's position: e4!

35.dxc4 ♕b7 36.♘b4 ♖xa3 37.c5 ♘xe4 38.c6 ♕xb4 39.cxd7 ♕b7 40.♔h2 ♖a2+



We had made the 40th move and got an additional 30 minutes. I had three extra pawns plus an attack. I think the last 10 moves need no comment, and I was somewhat surprised that my opponent kept on playing. It must have been a terrible feeling to play a position with zero chances, material down and knowing that the game was going to decide the team result (as Fridman had managed to keep the draw!).

41.♖g2 ♕xd7 42.♘xh4 ♖xg2+ 43.♔xg2 ♘f6 44.♘g6+ ♔h7 45.♘xe5 ♕d5+ 46.♘f3 ♖a2+ 47.♔h1 d3 48.♔g1 ♕e4 49.♖f2 ♕e3 50.♘d2 ♕d4 White resigned.

■ ■ ■

I must point out that the strength of the German team surprisingly turned out to be its equally capable members. With the exception of their failed match against Bulgaria, the German players didn't suffer a single individual defeat, and someone always won. I think that the admonition that I heard many years ago from my Dresden boss in the Bundesliga, Dr. Jordan, is very appropriate here: *'Niemand verliert, Mannschaft gewinnt!'* (Nobody loses, the team wins – ed.) As even the super-solid Danek Fridman, when his turn came, threw in all his knights and material and charged into hand-to-hand combat (see above).

> 'Kasim convinced me that I had the best if not the only chance to win a game in this match.'

But it was Georg Meier who brought the team the championship point in his last-round game against Sergei Movsesian, and once again as Black, I'll note. What's this – are sharp counterattacks the new face of German tactics?

NOTES BY

Georg Meier

FR 4.4 – C05
Sergei Movsesian
Georg Meier
Porto Carras 2011 (9)

When you're winning, everything seems easy and to happen naturally. In our big matches against Hungary, Ukraine and Azerbaijan we never thought about team victory before the matches. Every one of us was simply trying to perform at his best, and somehow that's what we managed to do most of the time.

The final match against Armenia was different; here we couldn't play without thinking about the final outcome of our adventure. Rustam Kasimdzhanov, our invaluable coach during the tournament, analysed the situation with me during our traditional nightly walk. The distribution of colours was unfortunate for the German team, as with any colour we couldn't hope for more than a draw on Arkadij's board (against Levon Aronian – ed.). Daniel was generally happier to be Black, leaving the task to squeeze something out of the white pieces to Gustafsson and me. So our Whites might be totally useless, while Gustafsson made sure to inform the team that Black against Sargissian has always meant suffering for him.

Fortunately, as there were no other boards left, Kasim convinced me that I had the best if not the only chance to win a game in this match.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5

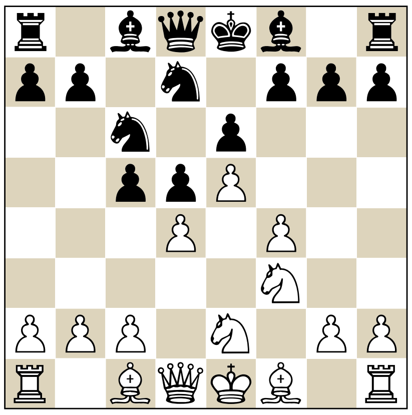
During the night Kasim had prepared some double-edged lines after Movsesian's customary 3.e5. In case he would choose anything else, I should just aim for a full game, keeping all three results possible.

3.♘c3 ♘f6!

Although 3.♘c3 was a surprise, my general battle plan clearly suggested my opening moves. It was not the day to find out what's wrong with my Rubinstein French!

4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♘e2

I am not impressed by the merits of this sideline (supporting the pawn chain with c2-c3) while the downside is pretty obvious: White can't develop harmoniously now.



7...♗e7!

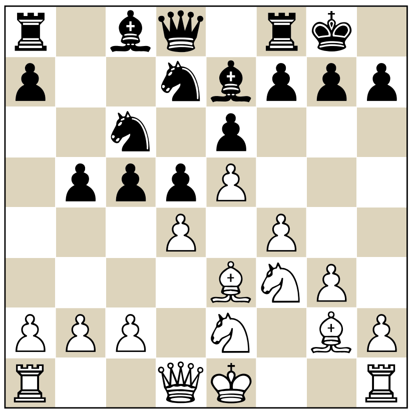
I had played the main move 7...♕b6 once, while the other popular choice 7...cxd4 only justifies White's last move. I played 7...♗e7 mainly to sidestep any possible preparation, but by now I also think it's the best move! I just continue developing and keep the b-pawn free.

7...♕b6 8.c3 f6 9.g3 cxd4 10.cxd4 fxe5 11.fxe5 ♗b4+ 12.♘c3 0-0 13.♗f4 ♘dxe5! (my novelty back then, leading to a dead-drawn endgame) 14.♗xe5 ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♗xc3+ 16.bxc3 ♕b2 17.♕c1 ♕f2+ 18.♔d1 ♕xf1+ 19.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 20.♔d2 ♖xc1 21.♖xc1 b6 22.♖f1 ♖b8! 23.♖f7 ♖b7 ½-½, Robson-Meier, Lubbock 2010.

8.g3 0-0 9.♗g2 b5

While White develops without any clear purpose, Black starts his demonstration on the queenside.

10.♗e3



10...♕a5+!? An original idea, forcing White to take a big decision.

11.♔f2 Asking for trouble... 11.♕d2 was called for, but my opponent apparently didn't sense any danger or didn't want to allow me the transition to a comfortable endgame.

11...f6

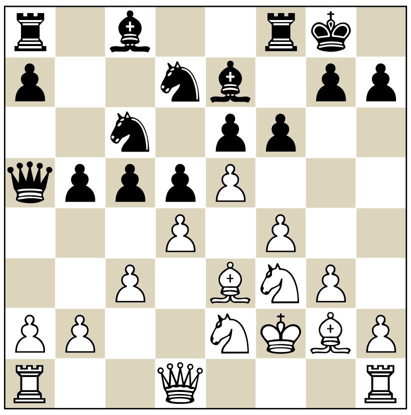
Be my guest!

12.c3

VLADIMIR BARSKY

The moment of truth. Georg Meier knows he has to play for a win with black: 'It was not the day to find out what's wrong with my Rubinstein French!'

Eyeing the soft spot on e6 now will only lead to White burning his fingers after 12.♗h3 fxe5 13.♗xe6+ ♔h8.



12...b4

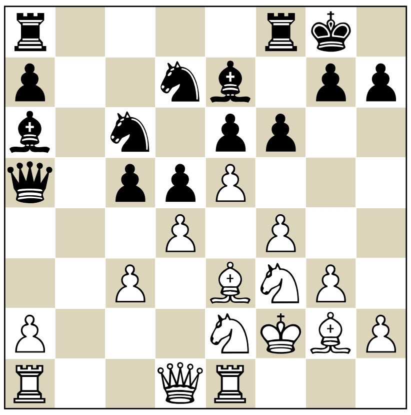
Sergei and I lack experience with this structure, and neither of us understand when to release the tension between e5 and f6.

12...fxe5! 13.fxe5 b4 (13...♘dxe5? 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 was 'totally' winning, according to Arkadij, but it's actually anybody's game after 15.h3) 14.♖e1 bxc3 15.bxc3 ♘b6 16.♔g1 ♘c4 17.♗g5 ♗xg5 18.♘xg5 h6 19.♘f3 ♖b8 would give Black a lasting initiative.

13.♖e1 bxc3 13...fxe5 was better.

14.bxc3 ♗a6

Now I felt that by closing the kingside with ...f6-f5 next I would reach a dream position, with all my pieces ready to invade the queenside. I realized that 15.exf6 has to be White's only choice now, when my opponent surprised me very pleasantly with his next move!



15.♗h3?

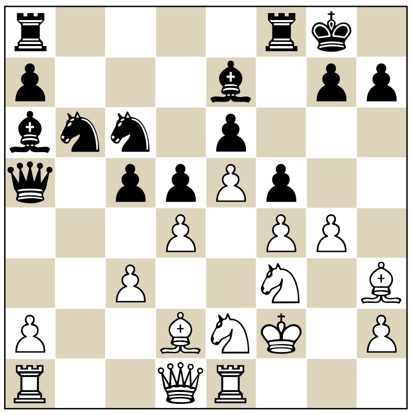
15.♔g1 f5 is also better for Black, but 15.exf6! ♘xf6 16.♗h3! ♘e4+ 17.♔g2 gives White counterchances.

15...f5 16.♗d2?

This just loses time, as taking on e2 and c3 was no threat yet. Sergei must have underestimated my next move, after which c3-c4 would be suicidal.

Better was 16.g4 g6 (16...♗xe2?! 17.♖xe2 ♕xc3? 18.gxf5 exf5 19.♖c1) 17.gxf5 gxf5 18.♖g1+ ♔h8.

16...♘b6 17.g4



17...♘c4

17...♗d3 was pretty strong too.

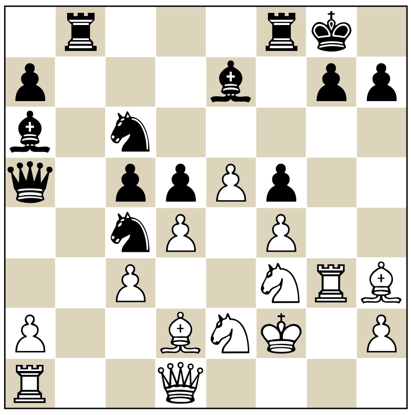
18.gxf5 exf5 19.♖g1 ♖ab8!

Black just continues the queenside invasion that should lead to an overwhelming attack. Sensing the upcoming sensation I was nervous, though, and took more time than necessary for every move.

20.♖g3

Sergei has no choice but to summon the ghost of an attack against my king. We both had about 20 minutes left to the time-control, but I couldn't decide how to win, and burned one minute after another.

Under these circumstances my next move was a very good practical decision, but with less pressure I might have decided the game just here.



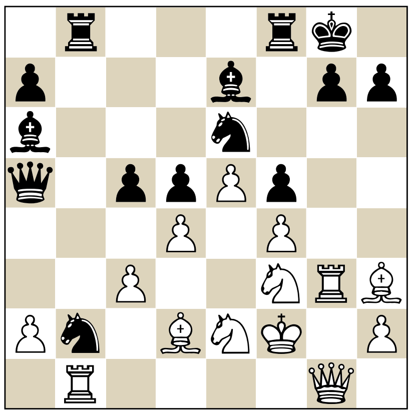
20...♘d8!?

On e6 my knight will totally stabilize the position, allowing a comfortable conversion of my advantage in the upcoming time-trouble. So comfortable that my, by now regular, glances at Board 4 (where Gustafsson was suffering against Sargissian) didn't cause any harm.

Directly winning was 20...cxd4 21.cxd4 ♘xd2 22.♕xd2 ♕xd2 23.♘xd2 ♖b2.

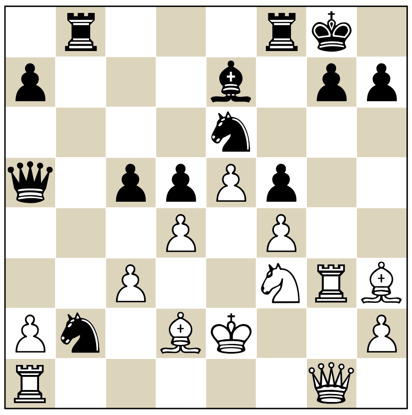
Or 20...♖b2 21.♕g1 ♘xd2 22.♖xg7+ ♔h8 23.♗xf5 ♘e4+. This was a line that I saw, but I don't know what it was that I didn't see. It must have been one of those ghosts that haunt so many of us when we are winning and want to finish the game without any complications.

21.♖b1 ♘b2 22.♕g1 ♘e6



The position is so good that for a while just about every sensible move keeps my winning advantage.

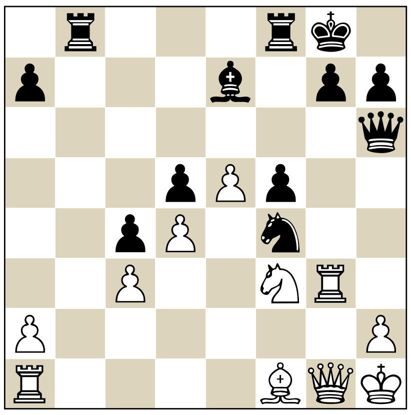
23.♖a1 ♗xe2 24.♔xe2



24...♕a6+

24...♘c4! would have made the white pawn chain collapse immediately.

25.♔f2 ♘d3+ 26.♔g2 ♘dxf4+ 27.♗xf4 ♘xf4+ 28.♔h1 ♕h6 29.♗f1 c4!



Just ‘killing’ the white light pieces.

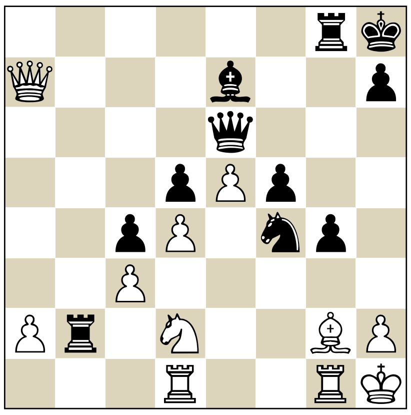
30.♕f2 ♖b6 31.♕c2

A last attempt to muddy the waters, but it didn’t distract me.

31...g5! 32.♕a4 g4 33.♕xa7 ♕e6 34.♖g1 ♔h8 35.♘d2 ♖b2 36.♖d1 ♖g8

Remember the comfort I was talking about? ☺

37.♗g2



37...♗h4

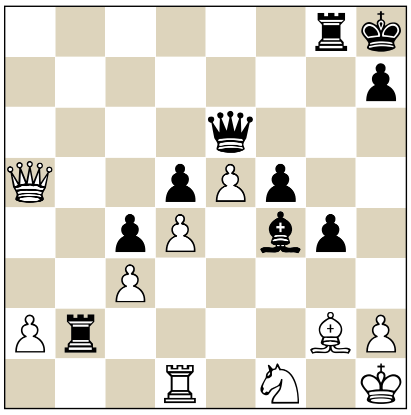
37...♘d3 38.♖gf1 f4 was a straightforward win.

38.♕a5 ♗f2 39.♖gf1 ♗e3

39...♕h6! 40.♖xf2 g3 curtains.

40.♖xf4 ♗xf4 41.♘f1

And now I finally had time to come up with a clear-cut winning plan.



41...♕h6! 42.♕xd5 ♗xh2 43.♕c6 I have to admit that I was thinking to myself, what a miracle that Movsesian even reached a lost endgame from the position he had!

43...♕xc6 44.♗xc6 ♗f4 45.♖e1 g3 46.♗g2 ♖gb8!

That’s it! After the rook swap White will become a mere spectator.

47.a4 ♖b1 48.♖e2 ♖8b2 49.♖xb2 ♖xb2 50.a5 ♖a2 51.♗c6 ♔g7 52.e6 ♔f6

White resigned.

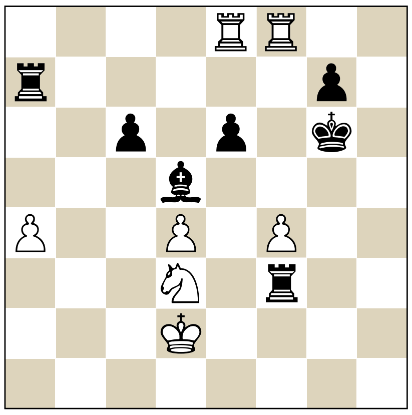
I think it’s time to apologize to the German chess federation, as with this win I put them in a most unpleasant situation. The enduring efforts of most former federation officials to banish all professionalism or high-level chess from Germany haven’t borne fruit yet. Now they even have to find money to increase our ‘bonus’ from 800 euros per person to another ridiculous figure. And all this while they are busy explaining the incredible importance of our Samowar for the team’s success in our national print-media and on Internet forums...

‘It’s time to apologize to the German chess federation, as with this win I put them in a most unpleasant situation.’

For me personally, this tournament was an unforgettable experience and I hope sooo much that we will continue to play with our best team, despite all the problems, and that my pessimism will be proved wrong!

■ ■ ■

But what’s a modern team without strong defence? As the example of Bulgaria demonstrated at these championships – not much. It was specifically thanks to courageous defensive play that Germany managed to win the gold medals. If Gustafsson had stumbled in his last game, Azerbaijan would have been the champions. But no. Pawn after pawn Jan exchanged his forces, approaching the point when bare rook and bishop would be left on the board against two rooks.



Sargissian-Gustafsson
Porto Carras 2011 (9)
position after 52.♘d3

52...♖xd3+!

Jan starts a series of prolonged exchanges, in other words rowing for the championship.

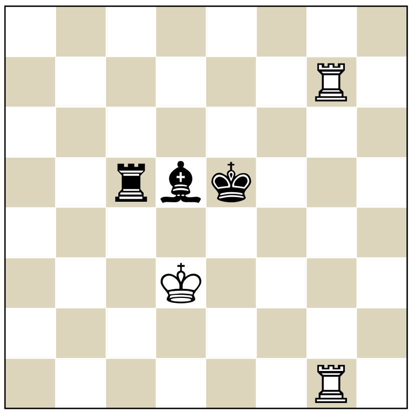
53.♔xd3 ♖xa4 54.♖a8 ♖b4 55.♖fb8 ♖c4 56.♖b1 c5!

Already close.

57.dxc5 ♖xc5 58.♖g1+ ♔f6 59.♖f8+ ♔e7 60.♖g8 e5!

Another one.

61.♖8xg7+ ♔f6 62.fxe5+ ♔xe5



A strange position, I’ve never seen such a thing, but it’s a draw.

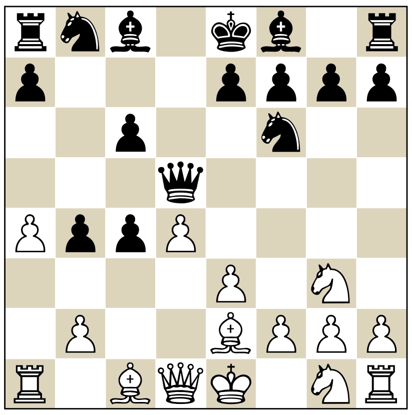
63.♖1g5+ ♔f6 64.♔d4 ♖b5 65.♖5g6+ ♔f5 66.♖g1 ♔e6 67.♖1g6+ ♔f5 68.♖g1 ♔e6 69.♖7g6+ ♔e7 70.♖1g5 ♗f7!
The concluding accord of Black's exchange strategy.
71.♖xb5 ♗xg6 72.♔e5 ♔f7 73.♖b7+ ♔g8 74.♔f6 ♗e4 75.♖g7+ ♔h8 76.♖g4 ♗c2 77.♖g3 ♗e4
Draw.

The European champions from the year before last, Azerbaijan, looked very good in the tournament. The team's coach, Vladimir Tukmakov, managed to work a minor miracle by creating a friendly, monolithic and above all strong-playing collective out of the July chaos. The best performance of the tournament by Mamedyarov alone was worth 2866! Obviously Shakh is back. Of which I'm very glad, as his play really is genuine chess!

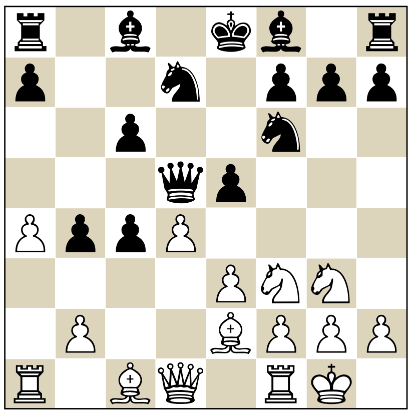
NOTES BY
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

SL 11.5 – D10
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Sabino Brunello
Porto Carras 2011 (1)

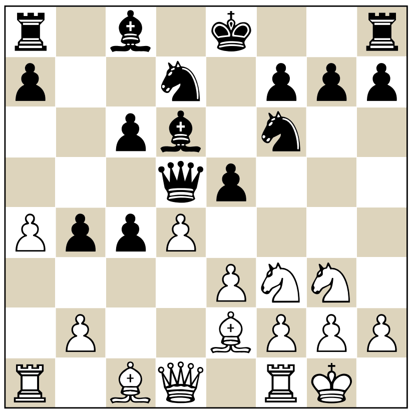
In the first round of the championship our team played against Italy. The beginning is always so important.
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 dxc4
This was unexpected, as my opponent has never played this move before.
4.e3
And my opponent didn't expect this reply. He plunged into a long think. I always play e4, but here I decided on e3 to take him out of his preparation.
4...b5 5.a4 b4 6.♘e4
On some sites my sixth move was given as 6.♘ce2 instead of 6.♘e4, but I want to stress that I really played 6.♘e4. There were some problems with the online transmission of the games in Greece. Something similar happened in my game against Karjakin.
6...♕d5 7.♘g3 ♘f6 8.♗e2



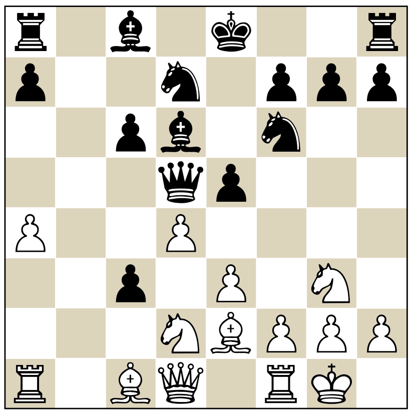
8...e5
In this position 8...h5!? used to be quite popular, and on two occasions Balogh Csaba played 8...♗a6. At the European Team Championships, Jan Gustafsson showed an interesting idea against Csaba: 9.e4 ♘xe4 10.♗f3 f5 11.♘1e2 g6 12.♘f4 ♕f7 13.0-0 ♘g5 14.d5 ♗g7 15.dxc6. I think White has an advantage here.
9.♘f3 ♘bd7?
This is not the best move. He should have taken on d4. After 9...exd4 taking with the queen will not yield White anything, but after 10.exd4 ♗d6, and now, for instance, 11.♕c2 b3 12.♕xc4 0-0 13.0-0 ♖e8 14.♕xd5 ♘xd5 15.♖e1 ♗g4 16.♗c4 ♘d7 17.♗d2 ♗xf3 18.gxf3, the position is maybe easier to play with white.
10.0-0



10...♗d6? After this move the black position is destroyed.
White would also be fine after 10...e4, for instance 11.♘d2 ♗a6 (after 11...c3 12.bxc3 bxc3 13.♗c4 cxd2? won't work because of 14.♗xd5 dxc1♕ 15.♕xc1 cxd5 16.♕c6 ♖b8 17.♖ab1, and Black is lost) 12.b3 ♕e6 13.bxc4 ♗d6 14.d5 cxd5 15.cxd5 ♘xd5 16.♗xa6 ♗xg3 17.hxg3 ♕xa6 18.♘xe4 ♕e6 19.♕d3 h6 20.♖d1, with a clear white advantage.
Best was 10...exd4!? 11.e4 ♘xe4 12.♘xe4 d3! 13.♖e1 ♗e7 14.♗f1 ♗a6 15.♘g3 ♔f8 16.♕d2! with the idea of ♕e3. I think this position is more comfortable to play with white, but Black should have gone for this anyway.



11.♘d2!
This accurate move gives White a strong attack.
11.♕c2 only gives White an edge after 11...exd4 12.♗xc4 d3 13.♗xd3.
During the game I was actually thinking of playing 11.e4, but then I decided that this move would not exploit my chances sufficiently, as it allows the position to be simplified: 11...♘xe4 12.♘xe4 ♕xe4 13.♗xc4 0-0 14.♖e1 ♕g4 15.h3 ♕h5 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♕xd6 ♘xc4 18.♕xb4 ♘b6 19.♗d2, and while White is clearly better, he has definitely not made the most of his opportunities.
11...c3
In case of 11...♗a6, Black now runs into 12.e4, and after 12...♕xd4 13.♘f5 ♕c5 14.♘b3 he can resign.
12.bxc3 bxc3

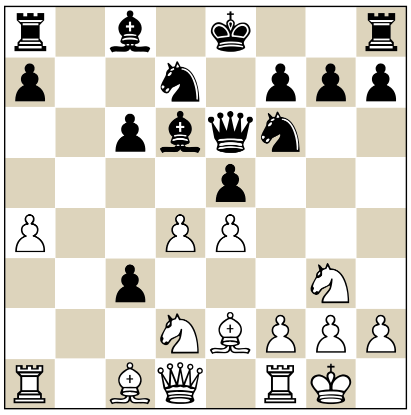


13.e4!

After this push the white position is winning.

13...♕e6

Taking the pawn, 13...♕xd4, doesn't work. After 14.♘f5 cxd2 15.♘xd4 dxc1♕ 16.♕xc1 exd4 17.♕xc6 the game is over.



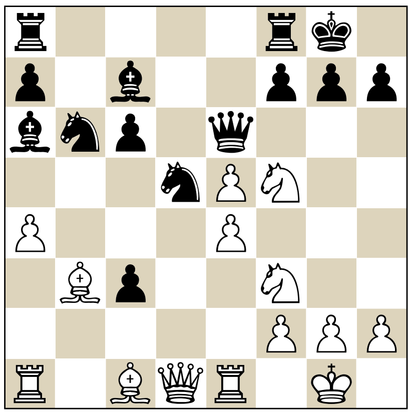
14.♘f5!

Another accurate blow.

14...0-0

Trying to save the game with 14...♗f8 15.♗c4 cxd2 won't help either, as after 16.♗xe6 fxe6 17.dxe5 ♘xe4 18.♘xg7+ ♗xg7 19.♕h5+ ♔d8 20.♕h4+ ♔c7 21.♗a3 both the knight and the game are lost.

15.♗c4 ♘d5 16.♘f3 ♘7b6 17.♗b3 ♗a6 18.♖e1 ♗c7 19.dxe5



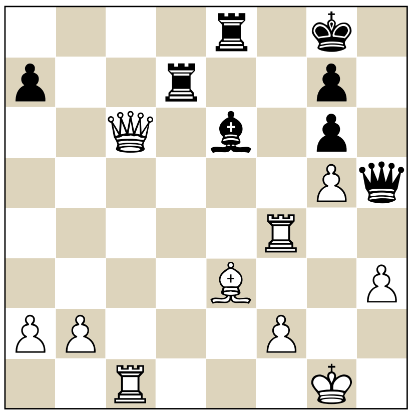
Black resigned.

* * *

Honestly speaking, it was the Azerbaijanis, after Russia's latest failure, who with the Ukrainians were considered the hot favourites to win. As early as the second round they had managed to beat the current World Champions, the Armenian team, with the impressive score of 3-1. By the way, the successful performance by Azerbaijan was also achieved thanks to the strengthening of fourth board with Guseinov, and Safarli also scored +2.

Playing 'genuine chess', Shakhriyar Mamedyarov was the cornerstone of the Azeri team, with the best performance (2866!) of the Championship.

VLADIMIR BARSKY



Guseinov-Sargissian
Porto Carras 2011 (2)
position after 32...♕h5

After playing a harmless variation of the Anti-Berlin, Guseinov seized the initiative later anyway, but for victory itself he needed a knockout blow.

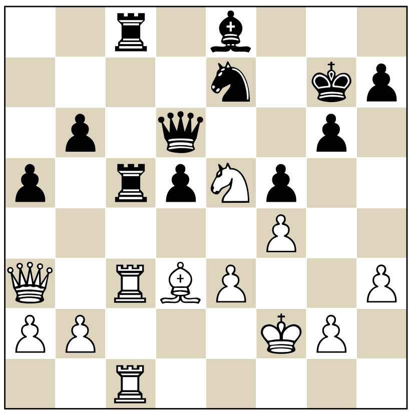
33.♕xe6+! ♖xe6 34.♖c8+ ♔h7 35.♖ff8 White only has a piece for the queen, but Black has to return it as they switch into a lost endgame.

35...♕d1+ 36.♔g2 ♕d5+ 37.f3 ♖d8 38.♖cxd8 ♕xd8 39.♖xd8 ♖xe3 40.♔f2 ♖e5 41.h4 ♖a5 42.a3 ♖a4 43.♔g3 ♖c4 44.♖a8 ♖c7 45.b4 Black resigned.

Next Azerbaijan had to overcome a small crisis in the middle of the tournament, when they made two match draws with Spain and France. And if they objectively missed a win in the match with Spain, then with France, up until the moment when Vugar Gashimov's unfortunate incident occurred (he lost consciousness due to a sudden rise in blood-pressure –ed.), the Azerbaijan team was even standing slightly worse. As White Radjabov had a slight advantage against Bacrot, on board two Vachier-Lagrave had an even bigger advantage against Gashimov, on board three Shakhriyar got nothing in the opening against Fressinet, and finally the affair on the last board was heading for a draw.

I myself was immersed in my game at that point, and so I won't tell you about something I didn't see. I can only judge by the facts. In a situation where one of their opponents was clearly feeling bad, the French didn't try and use their advantage (as would certainly have happened in football or any other sport), but offered a draw in the match, an occurrence that deserves the deepest respect. Real fair play. It's a shame, of course, that this harmed their subsequent tournament fate, and Maxim himself didn't score many points, losing three games in a row. I'm sure that Lady Luck will compensate the French gentlemen handsomely for their damages.

Coming back to the Azerbaijani team, I'll say that the crisis not only rallied them, but also gave them extra strength. The next day even Vugar Gashimov found the strength within himself to come out to play and make a draw as White against Grischuk. Tukmakov later called that decision the hardest of his coaching career. Gashimov's determined appearance for the game was supported by Teimour Radjabov's successful defending. Many people thought that the Svidler-Radjabov game would be the decisive one in determining the holders of the set of gold medals. What's more, at first it clearly unfolded in the Russian's favour.



Svidler-Radjabov
Porto Carras 2011 (6)
position after 36...♔g7

Up to this point Svidler has been playing like a living classic. His delicate execution of the Queen's Gambit as White has allowed him to get the e5 square for his knight along with the traditional isolated pawn. Which made the collapse of this luxurious position literally in two moves all the more galling.

37.♗a6 The simplest, especially in time trouble, was not to rush with 37.♘f3.

37...d4!? A counterattack by Radjabov's pet method!

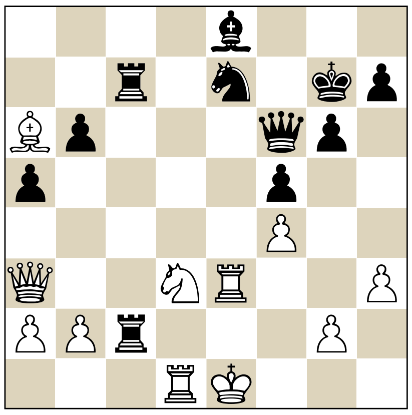
38.♖d1?

By now some accuracy combined with calmness was required from Petya, but alas 38.♖c4! wasn't played: 38...dxe3+ 39.♕xe3 ♖8c7 40.♖xc5 ♖xc5 41.♖xc5 ♕xc5 42.♕xc5 bxc5 43.♘d3 with a clear white edge.

VLADIMIR BARSKY

The day after he lost consciousness in the match against France, Vugar Gashimov insisted on playing against Russia and made a draw with Alexander Grischuk.

38...dxe3+ 39.♔e1 ♕f6 40.♖xe3 ♖8c7 41.♘d3 ♖c2



The initiative has finally switched to Black, and it continued to grow.

42.♖d2 ♖xd2 43.♔xd2 ♗f7 44.♕a4 ♗d5 45.g4 ♗e4 46.♖xe4 fxe4 47.♕xe4 ♖d7 48.♔e3 ♘c6 49.g5 ♕d6 50.♕c4 ♖e7+ 51.♔f2 ♘d4 52.♘e5 ♖c7 53.♕d3 ♖c2+

White resigned.

It seemed to be all over, the path to Olympus was open! Heracles (in our case Radjabov) had already achieved his most important feat – now all he had to do was get there.

The whole problem is that modern chess is full of Heracleses, and no sooner does one of them succeed in tasting the joy of victory, than another one brings him a bitter cup. And if Teimour made a draw as Black with Topalov without any particular problems, then his sluggish play as White against Arkadij Naiditsch cost Teimour and his team the champions' laurels.

The Hungarians were happy, we can even say joyful, at the end. Without looking in the tournament reference books I can confidently say that they delivered the most painful defeat to the Bulgarians in the entire history of their appearances on the international stage: 4-0. And it was exactly this unbelievable score that they needed to grab the bronze medals.

NOTES BY

Peter Leko

GI 4.1 – D85
Peter Leko
Veselin Topalov
Porto Carras 2011 (9)

Hungary-Bulgaria 4-0! After this amazing fairytale result that secured bronze medals for the Hungarian team we were faced with the following question: did we believe in this miracle before the start of the round? Well, I don't know what kind of answer you expect to hear. Let me try to describe the situation as it looked just before the decisive last round. But let's start at the beginning. After a very bad start with just 4 points after 4 rounds, the following idea popped up during our regular evening walk. Would we be ready to go swimming in the cold sea if it would yield us a medal? We did not have to think twice: yes, of course!

Somehow after this promise we started to have very lucky pairings (they are the main drawback of the Swiss system!). We were victims of this system earlier, so we know exactly how it feels for other teams. Just last year we tragically lost the bronze medals at the Olympiad this way! So we started winning match after match, and after our Round 7 win against Slovenia we were paired against the surprisingly good Romanians. By now our confidence had fully returned, and we believed that with another win in the 8th round the medals would be within reach!

However, at a disappointing 1½-1½ we could have won the final game on Board 4, but in Balogh-Szabo, Black escaped in time-trouble with a brilliantly devilish trap in a lost position! Our team was badly shocked by this missed chance and we could see that our hopes for the bronze medals were no longer very realistic.

In this situation we went on to play the 9th round against Bulgaria. Since calculating made no sense in our position, we decided to just play without pressure and see what would happen. But we still hoped that if Armenia beat the surprise team Germany (a realistic possibility), a win against Bulgaria would give us bronze, unless Russia beat Slovenia 4-0 (unlikely, but looking at the Russian line-up, not impossible!). From the Bulgarian perspective, if the Armenia-Germany match ended in a draw, then a big win against us could even yield Bulgaria a gold medal! In one word: total 'madness', and a dramatic last round was about to start!

Just a few words about my own performance. I felt a 'victim' of our lucky pairings because, as the World Cup also highlighted, I have problems facing weaker opposition (since my return, my only loss in 31 games was against Shankland!) and here, too, I suffered against the lower-rated players (time to take this problem seriously!). However, after having seen that I was going to play against an in-form Topalov in the last round I was really looking forward to that game, whatever the result! After all, the main idea of my nine-month break was to get ready again mentally for such big clashes!

1.d4

Somehow it felt like the correct decision not to challenge Topalov to a Najdorf duel in the last round of a team competition.

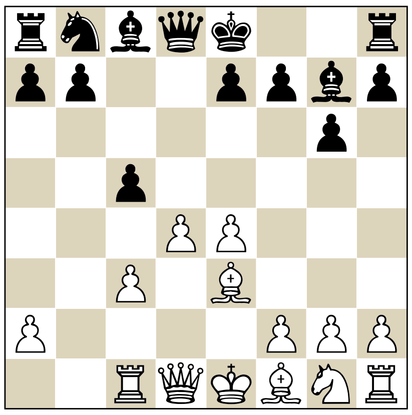
1...♘f6 2.c4 g6

Looking at my opponent's games in the tournament one should have expected the classical Queen's Gambit, but I had the feeling that Veselin would try something more dynamic, and I had no objection against an interesting fight.

3.♘c3 d5

I had been expecting (or hoping for?) the King's Indian, but since the last round was played at 1.00 p.m. there would not be enough time to prepare for everything.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 c5 8.♖c1

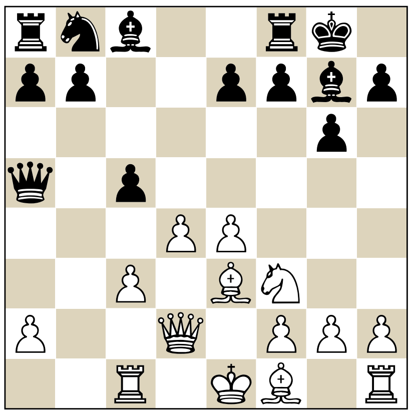


Since Veselin clearly has much more experience and knowledge of the modern theory of the Grünfeld after having prepared for two decisive matches, in 2009 against Kamsky, and in 2010 for the Anand match (as reported with a 102 cores brute force), it seemed logical to pick a system he might not have studied so deeply.

8...♕a5 9.♕d2

Kramnik's favourite system. After all he had prepared it for the Kasparov match back in 2000 with the main strategic idea of avoiding Garry's famous computer preparation. So it suited my strategy perfectly well.

9...0-0 10.♘f3



10...♖d8

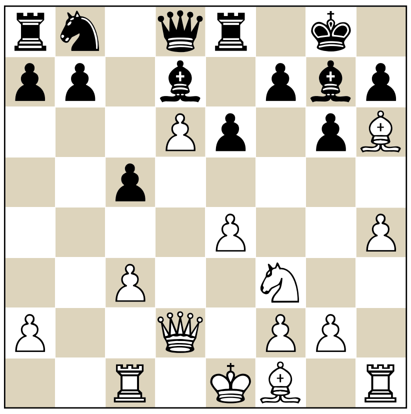
Black's universal set-up against the 7.♗e3 system, but to be honest I was surprised to see this. I remembered a game Potkin-Svidler from last year's Russian Super Final and thought that this line was considered suspect for Black.

11.d5 e6 12.♗g5 f6

Honestly speaking, I am always surprised to see this line played by great players, because since I have my own history with the Grünfeld from the

1990s as a pupil of Adorjan's 'Black is OK' school, such a scenario was never part of our training!

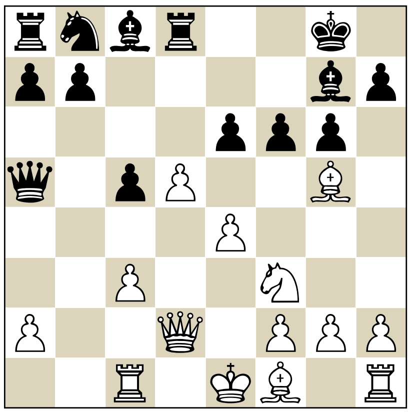
That was probably also the reason why my attempt to surprise Vishy with the Grünfeld (a naive try, especially because he had prepared the same Grünfeld for that match just a bit more deeply...!) in my rapid match against him in Miskolc 2009 rebounded like a boomerang! When he blitzed out his moves till 12.♗g5, I thought for about five minutes and 'preferred to get mated' after 12...♖e8 13.d6 ♗d7 14.♗h6 ♕d8 15. h4



Anand-Leko
Miskolc 2009 (match-1)
position after 15.h4

rather than to weaken my kingside structure with ...f7-f6.

Of course, in modern theory very few people seem to bother about such details, as the new policy seems to be: if it works, I don't care how it looks. But I thought that I should at least mention this change of tendency for the benefit of my dear readers.



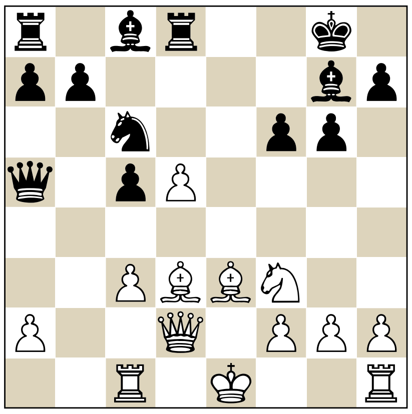
13.♗e3!

This is the move! It felt a bit stupid that I spent six minutes on it, but I wasn't really familiar with this line and did not want to mix up the moves! For a long time 13.♗f4 was considered the main continuation, but thanks to Svidler Black has created enough counterplay.

13...♘c6 14.♗d3!

White has lost a tempo with the ♗e3-g5-e3 manoeuvre, but thanks to provoking ...f7-f6 White has gained an enduring trump! For example, without it the white bishop could never have been developed to this ideal square.

14...exd5 15.exd5

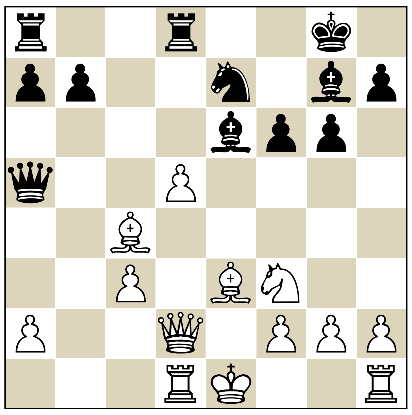


15...c4!

Black is using his lead in development to change the course of the game before White can stabilize with c3-c4.

16.♗xc4 ♗e6 17.♖d1 ♘e7

This was the way Black wanted to solve his opening problems, and as I was told after the game(!) this is exactly the line Delchev (Board 3 of the Bulgarian team) had suggested in his book published in 2011.

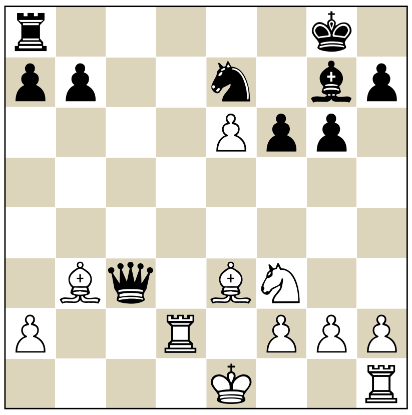


18.dxe6!

Maybe I am old-fashioned, but after having seen that White could make this positional queen sacrifice I did not feel the need to study this line deeply, despite the fact that even the super-engines believe that Black is absolutely fine.

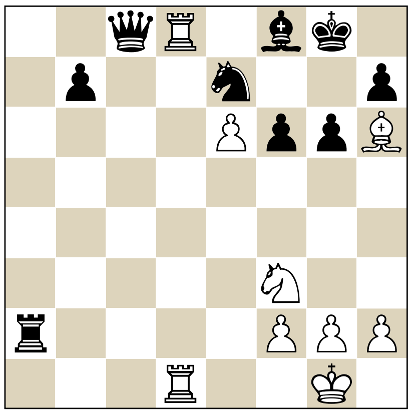
18...♖xd2 19.♖xd2 ♕xc3 20.♗b3

Now it's clear that if White gets the chance to castle, Black will be in big trouble, but being a newcomer to this position I started calculating and realized that the feeling is a nice thing but concrete lines are concrete lines, so I would have to watch out.



20...♕c1+

Nor was it easy to find the correct reply after 20...a5 21.0-0 a4, but then I saw that 22.♗xa4!! is not only necessary but also gives the advantage: 22...♖xa4 23.♖d8+ ♗f8 24.♗h6 (this motif will reappear in the game a couple of times!) 24...♕c8 25.♖fd1 ♖xa2 (25...♖a8 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8 27.♗xf8 ♔xf8 28.g3 is simply pawn up), and now White has to be precise:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

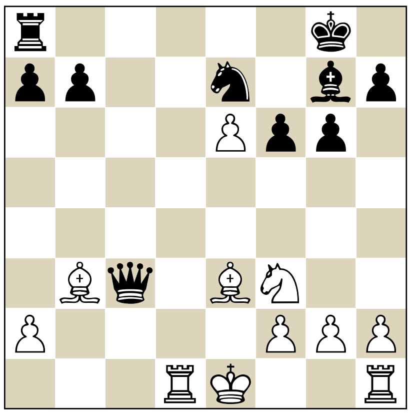
26.♘e1!! (26.♖xc8 ♘xc8 27.g3 ♗xh6 28.♖d8+ ♗f8 29.♖xc8 ♖e2 30.♘d4 ♖e1+ 31.♔g2 ♔g7 32.♖c7+ ♔g8 33.♖xb7 ♖e4 34.♖d7 ♗c5 should lead to a draw) 26...♖a8 27.♗xf8! (this is the point!) 27...♕xd8 28.♖xd8 ♖xd8 29.

♗xe7 ♖e8 30.♗xf6 ♖xe6 31.♗c3, and Black has drawing chances; but White is better.

21.♖d1 ♕c3+

Since I got into some kind of time-trouble in almost all my games, I decided to repeat moves once.

22.♖d2 ♕c1+ 23.♖d1 ♕c3+



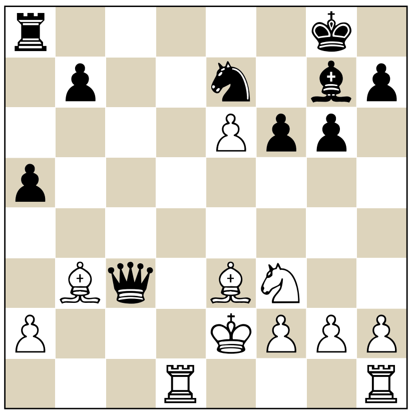
24.♔e2!

I was very happy with the outcome of the opening, and by now it was obvious that neither of us was prepared for this line.

In this position I think this is a big advantage for White, because humanly speaking, any top player would choose to be White here!

24...a5

The most natural move, played instantly. Black has to try and attack the white bishop on b3, because this piece is the soul of White's position!



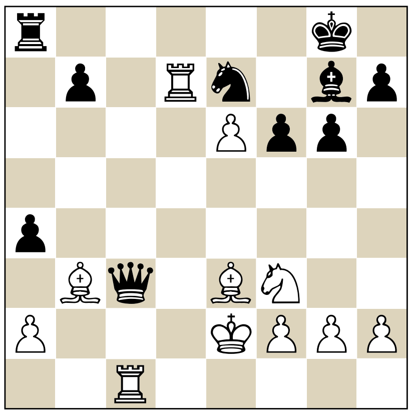
25.♖d7!

I felt that this should be correct, but suddenly there were lots of lines to calculate. Since I could not remember the Potkin-Svidler game, I decided to simply forget about it for the moment and to just focus on what was happening on the board.

25...a4 26.♖c1

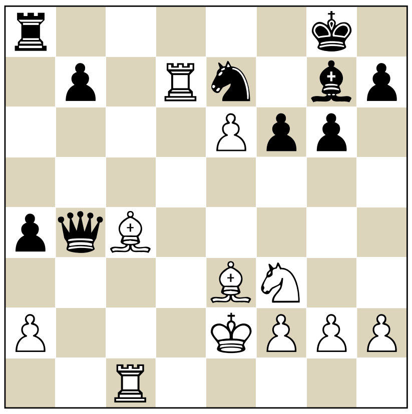
VLADIMIR BARSKY

Peter Leko: 'It would be much more useful to have no annotation to a game than such commentary on the Internet, because it confuses the amateur public completely.'



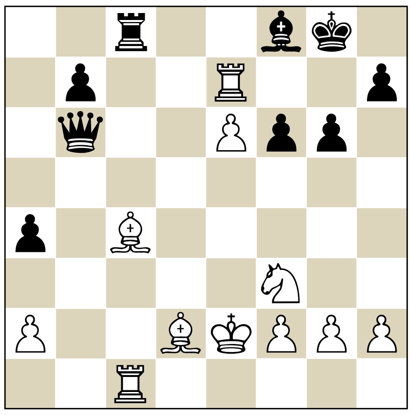
26...♕b2+ I was happy to see this, as all I could remember was that something like this had happened in the afore-mentioned game.

I had spent all my time calculating the position after 26...♕b4! 27.♗c4! (forced, as 27.♖c4? ♕b5 28.♘d4 ♕a6 is simply bad for White), and now:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) During the game I mainly focused on the following line, which looked like being in the spirit of the position: 27...♖c8!? 28.♗d2!? ♕b6 29.♖xe7 ♗f8 – a spectacular line, and now



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

30.♖f7 ♖xc4 31.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 32.♖xc4 ♕xe6+ 33.♔d3 b5 smells like enough counterplay, but humans tend to like many pieces versus the queen: 34.♗b4+ ♔g8 35.♖c2 ♕d5+ 36.♘d4 ♕xg2 37.f3 ♕f1+ 38.♔e4 is a typical way in which White would like to play this position. Black might make a draw, but it's no fun;

B) The alternative 27...♗f8 is rather passive and did not bother me during the game, as I had the feeling that time was on White's side. Nevertheless, if backed by engines and strong nerves, Black might make a passive draw, but again not something a top player would like, especially because it does not look like a draw.

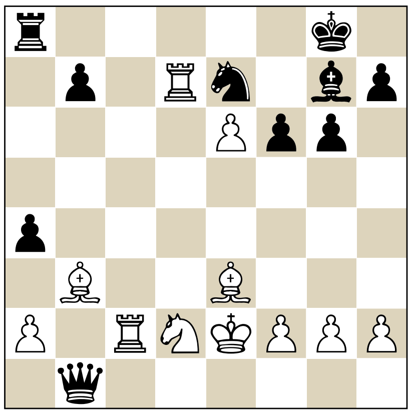
Porto Carras 2011

		Bp	Mp
1	Germany	22½	15
2	Azerbaijan	23	14
3	Hungary	23	13
4	Armenia	22½	13
5	Russia	21½	13
6	Netherlands	19	12
7	Bulgaria	18½	12
8	Poland	22	11
9	Romania	20	11
10	Spain	19½	11
11	Italy	19	11
12	Serbia	22	10
13	Georgia	22	10
14	Israel	20	10
15	Ukraine	19	10
16	Czech Republic	18½	10
17	Slovenia	17½	10
18	Moldova	20½	9
19	France	19	9
20	Greece	19	9
21	Croatia	17	9
22	England	18½	8
23	Switzerland	18½	8
24	Latvia	18	8
25	Montenegro	18	8
26	Iceland	18	8
27	Sweden	17½	8
28	Denmark	17	8
29	Norway	15½	8
30	FYROM	18½	7
31	Finland	17	7
32	Austria	16½	7
33	Lithuania	16	7
34	Turkey	16	6
35	Scotland	13½	5
36	Luxembourg	9½	4
37	Wales	5½	2
38	Cyprus	5½	1

38 teams, 9 rounds

27.♖c2 ♕b1 28.♘d2

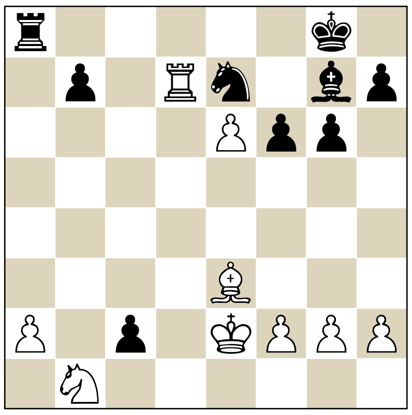
This feels right, and I was surprised to find out after the game that the engines also suggest 28.♖d1. During the game I did not waste much thought on it, as it simply feels wrong to remove the active rook: 28...axb3 29.♖xb1 bxc2 30.♖xb7 ♘d5 31.♗d2 ♗f8, and indeed this is absolutely nothing.



28...axb3 Giving back the queen is the logical follow-up of Black's play. It's a different matter that in this case Black agrees to suffer.

After the game some people asked me what would have happened after the curious 28...♕g1. Well, I can simply take on a4: 29.♗xa4! ♕xg2 (29...♖xa4? 30.♖d8+ ♗f8 31.♗h6 leads to mate, as we already know) 30.♗b3, and now the bishop on b3 is cemented for the rest of the game and the ...a5-a4 plan was just a waste of time!

29.♘xb1 bxc2



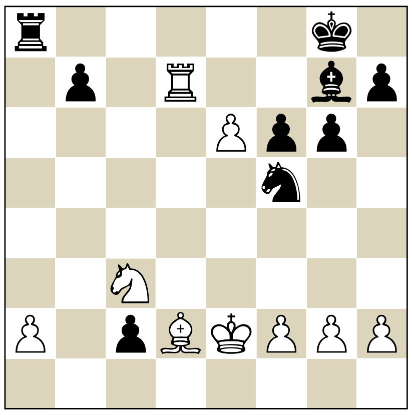
30.♘c3!

I like this move a lot! Strangely enough, the computer again misleads you by misjudging the endgame.

It gives 30.♘a3 as the main move, but this is completely wrong: after 30...♘c6 31.♘xc2 ♖xa2 32.♔d2 ♗f8 it is clear to the human eye that Black has more than enough counterplay, and by now the engine had also corrected its assessment with the following line: 33.♖xb7 ♘b4 34.♖c7 ♗d6 35.♖c8+ ♔g7 36.♗d4 ♗e7 37.♖c7 ♔f8 38.♔d1 ♘xc2 39.♖xc2 ♖a6, which is just a draw.

30...♘f5 31.♗d2!

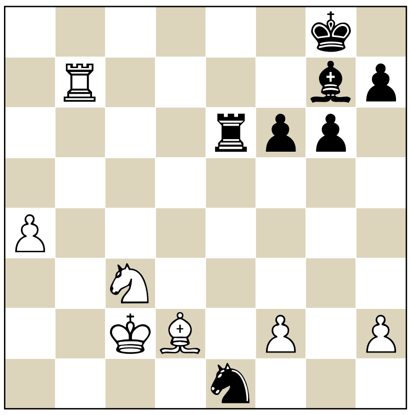
Now White has a very harmonious set-up, and it is clear that the pawn on c2 is in good hands!



31...h5?

Incredible, but this is the first independent move of the game, which turns out to be a losing novelty! Many people will wonder how on earth it is possible that in a game between two world-class players in a critical last-round decider about medals in the European Championship such a thing could happen? Well, the answer is pretty simple: this is modern chess! It's impossible to know or remember everything, especially if this is not your main repertoire and you have only ended up in this particular line because of some surprises from both sides.

I was shocked to read later that Black had missed a draw in this position in the following way: 31...♖e8 32.♖xb7! (during the game I considered this to be a technical win for White, and many would have talked about a prepared winning novelty ☺! In the aforementioned game Potkin missed his chance by mixing up the move order: 32.♔d3 b6!, and Black escaped) 32...♖xe6+ 33.♔d3 ♘h4 (sad necessity) 34.♔xc2 ♘xg2 35.a4, claiming that after 35...♘e1+ Black survives.

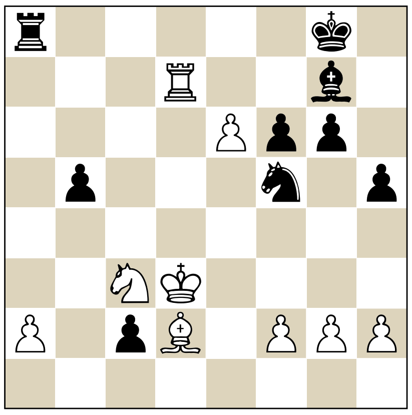


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

It would be much more useful to have no annotation to a game than such commentary on the Internet, because it confuses the amateur public completely. At depth 12 the computer assessment is around 0.20 and we have an equal number of pawns, but humanly speaking, Black soon has to resign. Those who only believe the engines, should at least give it a chance to go deeper: at depth 24 it is already 0.96, with a lot of tendency to increase. After 36.♔b3 ♘d3 37.♗e3 ♗f8 38.♖b8 ♔f7 39.a5 White wins easily.

I guess that Topalov came to the same conclusion, which is why his 31...h5 was born out of desperation! In fact, his move does not change the evaluation that Black's position was technically lost at this point anyway.

32.♔d3 b5!? This was his idea, but I was expecting it because after all we are both still human!



33.e7! I was very happy with this unexpected move, which wins on the spot.

33...♖e8 34.♘d5

In the end I preferred to play for domination, but basically all roads lead to Rome now.

The technical way was 34.♘xb5 ♔f7 35.♔xc2 ♖xe7 36.♖xe7+ ♔xe7 37.a4.

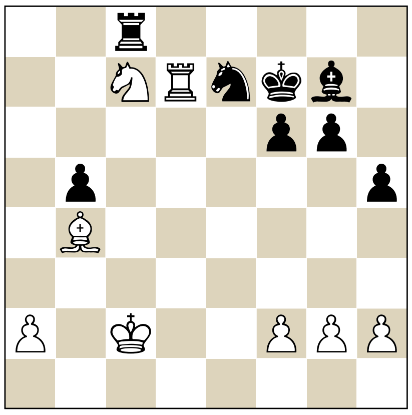
34...♔f7 35.♔xc2

Black can't untangle himself without losing material.

ALEXANDER MOTYLEV

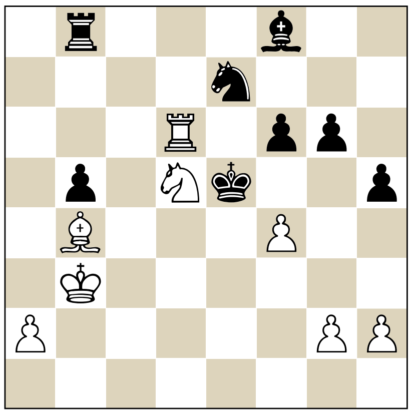
His reputation as a trainer keeps growing. A regular member of Vishy Anand's team, Rustam Kasimdzhanov was universally praised for his role in Germany's win.

35...♖c8+ 36.♘c7! ♘xe7 37.♗b4



The pin is killing.

37...♗f8 38.♔b3 ♖b8 39.♘d5 ♔e6 40.♖d6+ ♔e5 41.f4+



And Black resigned.

With this victory we were leading 3-0, and on Board 4 the tables had turned in our favour! By now it was clear that the German team would win their match against Armenia if Gustafsson saved a very unpleasant but drawish endgame against Sargissian. But this would mean that we would only be able to beat the Armenians on tiebreak with a 4-0 win. In the meantime, Gyimesi on Board 4 missed a win in one move on move 40, and as a consequence he had to squeeze victory in a theoretically drawish but practically more pleasant endgame. These were the last two games of the Championship in the men's section. First the game Sargissian-Gustafsson ended in a draw, and half an hour later Gyimesi did the impossible and won the rook ending in an ultra-marathon game! Besides the great happiness and celebration, we still had to face the cold sea on a stormy evening... which we did! ■

Some years ago an international poll was conducted to determine the greatest chess player of the 20th century. It turned out to be a close run contest between Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov. But if the public had instead been asked to vote for the greatest chess *entertainer* then it is most likely that this honour would have been bestowed upon another world champion. Mikhail Tal is sadly no longer with us, but he will forever be affectionately remembered as 'the magician from Riga'. A tribute brimming with personal memories by **Jimmy Adams**.

'Let me entertain you!'

The Magic of Mikhail Tal

Mikhail Tal giving a simul in Birmingham during his brief English tour in 1964. In the true spirit of theatre, Tal not only wanted to have fun himself, but also wanted everyone else, players and spectators alike, to have fun too.

November 9, 2011 marked the 75th anniversary of the birth of this extraordinarily popular grandmaster, whose genius for chess tactics has continued to amaze and inspire chess fans, young and old, right up to the present day.

I can still vividly remember when the dashing Tal first came to England in the sixties. His exciting, imaginative and even revolutionary attacking style of play was perfectly in tune with the explosion of youthful creativity that the country was experiencing at this time. In fact, the minute he walked into a prestigious department store in London to give a simultaneous exhibition in January 1964, each and every one of his prospective opponents instinctively knew, win or lose, they were going to have the most memorable experience of their chess life.

You see, in the true spirit of theatre, Tal not only wanted to have fun himself, but also wanted everyone else, opponents and spectators alike, to have fun too. We dare say that no other grandmaster, before or since, has sacrificed so many chess pieces, demolished so many castled positions, hunted so many kings, delivered so many checkmates, or smoked so many cigarettes during the course of a simultaneous exhibition, as 'Misha' Tal.

Yet, although his brilliant combinations struck his unsuspecting opponents like a bolt of lightning, Tal played his moves with a gentle touch. Even when he was sacrificing a knight on e6 or a bishop on h7, two of his 'favourite squares', he did not bang the piece down but directed it softly to its destination.

He also moved very quickly. Ideas came into his head so effortlessly that he never gave the impression of being hurried as he completed circuit after circuit. His adversaries only knew that they would really have liked a little more time to think over their reply before he arrived at their board.

More often than not, Tal would complete an exhibition within three hours or so and leave his vanquished opponents asking themselves 'where did I go wrong?' as they surveyed a scene of devastation and an exposed king unable either to run or hide from the grandmaster's well-coordinated fighting forces.

Perhaps not surprisingly, in these sizzling displays Tal sometimes lit too many fireworks, as well as cigarettes, and got his fingers burned. But he made relatively few outright blunders, and a defeat usually reflected great credit on an opponent's tenacity to withstand his customary early onslaught and then to stage a brave fight-back.

■ ■ ■

'What were you doing when President Kennedy was shot' is an often asked question. My own answer? 'Well, 22 November 1963 was the day I learned that Mikhail Tal was coming to England to play in the Hastings Chess Congress!' Remember, at that time the names on every chess player's lips were Bobby Fischer and Mikhail Tal – and it was these two legends that I most wanted to see in real life.

During the sixties I was working at the John Lewis department store in London's main shopping thoroughfare and so, when I heard this exciting news, I lost no time in asking my manager, Mr. Burrows, if I could take a few days annual leave after Christmas as I wanted to visit a chess(!) tournament. For a moment, he glared at me in disbelief, then, after a pause for thought and in his customary 'sergeant major' tone, blasted me: 'Out of the question! Busiest time of the year... New Year Sales... Stocktaking...'

So... no sympathy there, even though the big boss, John Spedan Lewis, had been a competitive chess player himself and had over the years encouraged a good number of other players to work for him, including two British champions. Mr Lewis's enthusiasm for chess had once extended to establishing a luxurious National Chess Centre, but this came to an abrupt end after a German bombing raid in 1940. Even after he died, earlier in 1963, the firm retained an interest in the game and continued to host large-scale county matches on the weekends in the modern staff canteen of its newly rebuilt Oxford Street store.

And so it was, when Christmas had come and gone, I reconciled myself to making a brief visit to Hastings after work on Saturday afternoon and duly arrived at the sea front Sun Lounge more than three hours after the commencement of round six. One game in the Premier tournament had already been completed – a brilliant miniature between Dr. Bely and Levente Lengyel – and it was not long before Tal also finished, after disposing of the English master John Littlewood. He then joined in a postmortem with the two Hungarians and this, in itself, made my long trek to Hastings more than worthwhile. It was just what I wanted to see, Tal in action, displaying his full tactical genius, and I was not to be disappointed. He launched one king hunt after another, each leading to checkmate, and analysed with such speed and precision that by the end my head was in a spin.

Later on I also watched Tal playing 5-minute chess with Women's World Champion Nona Gaprindashvili, winner of the Hastings Challengers. He was really enjoying himself. In one game, after a frantic time scramble, a bishop had dropped from the table. But when Tal set up the pieces for the next game he was too impatient to go looking for the missing piece and so proceeded to play at queen's bishop odds! However, to compensate for the material deficit, he placed nearly all his pawns on dark squares in Stonewall formation, so the missing bishop would have been pretty redundant anyway, and then set about launching his customary kingside attack, for which the remaining bishop was as useful as ever. Though Tal had actually taken second place to Nona in the New Year lightning tournament, he had a soft spot for her, as he did for women players in general. But Nona did not always appreciate his chivalry. In their next tournament, in Iceland, Tal deliberately did not press his clock when Nona was in terrible time-trouble and she told him off: 'You do that again and I'll resign at once!'

Anyway, travelling back home on the train that night, I got out my pocket set and recounted as much as I could of the postmortem analysis of the Bely-Lengyel game and discovered to my amazement that the constantly pursued white king had been checkmated in all four quarters of the chessboard and by each of the black pieces: queen, rook, bishop, knight and even a pawn. I think if Tal were alive today, he would not need to carry around a laptop with an analysis engine. He *was* an analysis engine!

■ ■ ■

So, after witnessing first hand the fantasy world of Mikhail Tal, on Monday morning it was back to the routine of work. But on Thursday of the same week I was in for a huge surprise...

I was busy stacking some shelves when Mr. Burrows came up and bellowed to me: 'You know, the Russian is coming tonight. They say he can play chess with his hands tied behind his back! You want to see him?' I was lost for words. No, I didn't know Tal was coming to my place of work. Yes, I did want to see him, more than anything in the world. Sensing my stunned silence, Mr. Burrows did not wait for my reply, but continued 'You can go off early tonight. 6.30 in the auditorium!'

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. On Thursdays the store was open till 8 p.m. It was late night West End shopping, the busiest time of the week, and after cashing up we didn't get away much before 9 o'clock. And here was the manager letting me leave the shop floor just before the evening rush – to watch some chess! Needless to say, he had revealed a sensitive side that I had not seen before and from then on I regarded him as more of a rough diamond than a sergeant major.

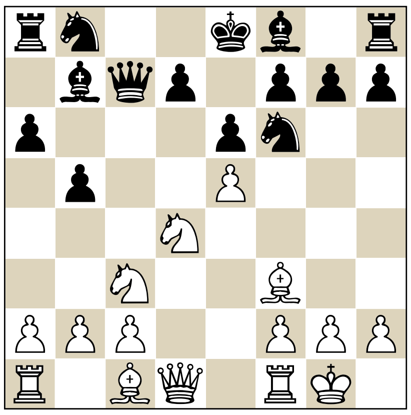
When I went along to the auditorium there were already a large number of spectators surrounding the 24 contestants and I took up a ringside position behind a couple of attacking players from the young London club 'Cedars'. With talents like these, I knew that sparks were sure to fly.

Then Tal entered the room to general applause. He was wearing a blue suit and brown shoes and simply radiated charisma. However, unlike Garry Kasparov, he did not wear an Audemars Piguet watch. In fact he didn't wear a watch at all. But he was nevertheless punctual in getting the show on the road, playing his initial moves quickly, but rhythmically, and opening with 1.e4 in the majority of the games. There was a curious reason for this. The previous year he had undergone a kidney operation and, while recuperating, had spent his time reporting on the Botvinnik-Petrosian world title match. However, after annotating so many of these exclusively queen's pawn games, he had been turned off playing 1.d4 himself!

It was not long before Tal sacked his first piece, on h7, and his poor opponent had to resign after only 12 moves. Other players fell within 20-30 moves. In the following characteristic effort, Misha fully lived up to his reputation as a slayer of the Sicilian.

SI 41.12 – B43
Mikhail Tal
J.K. Jones
London 1964, simul John Lewis

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♗e2 ♘f6 7.0-0 b5 8.♗f3
Immediately exploiting the early queenside fianchetto.
8...♗b7 9.e5!



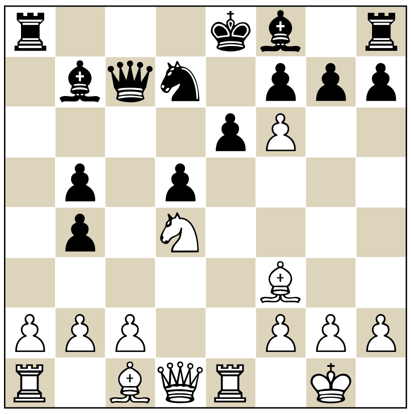
9...b4
Of course 9...♗xf3 10.♕xf3 ♘d5 11.♘xd5 wins; 9...♕xe5 leaves the bishop b7 hanging; and 9...♘d5 would saddle himself with weak doubled d-pawns after exchanges on d5.
10.♘cb5!
Much better than 10.exf6 bxc3.
10...axb5 11.exf6 d5
To close the h1-a8 diagonal which is more vulnerable for Black than White. 11...♖a5 looks a tougher defence, defending the b5 pawn.

Whether playing blitz with the Women's World Champion at Hastings, or a simul at a department store in London, Tal was ever the showman…

…as also in this exhibition in Yugoslavia where Tal played chess and table tennis – simultaneously!

12.♖e1 Black must now be wary of the dangers on the e-file.

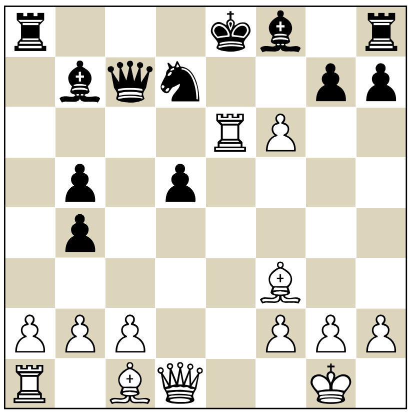
12...♘d7 Doubtless, 12...gxf6 would have been met by the same sacrifice as in the game.



13.♘xe6!!

It was Tal's ultra-aggressive approach right from the early opening that made him such an effective simultaneous player.

13...fxe6 14.♖xe6+

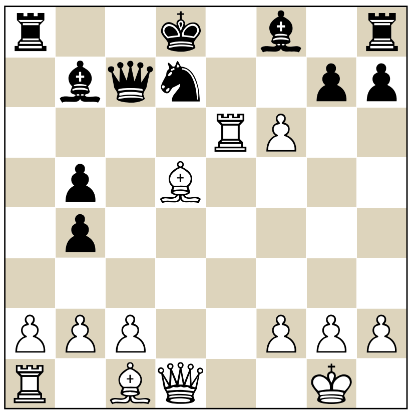


14...♔d8

Or 14...♔f7 15.♗xd5 ♗xd5 16.♕xd5 ♘xf6 17.♖xf6+ ♔xf6 18.♕f3+ (driving Black's pieces back before recapturing the sacrificed material) 18...♔g6 (18...♔e6 only allows White to gain time for further development, e.g. 19.♗f4 ♕a7 20.♖e1+ ♔d7 21.♕d5+ ♗d6 22.♕xd6+ ♔c8 23.♕c6+ ♔d8 24.♗g5+ ♕e7 25.♗xe7 mate) 19.♕g4+ ♔f7 20.♕f5+ ♔g8 (20...♔e8 21.♗g5 followed by 22.♖e1+) 21.♕d5+ and 22.♕xa8.

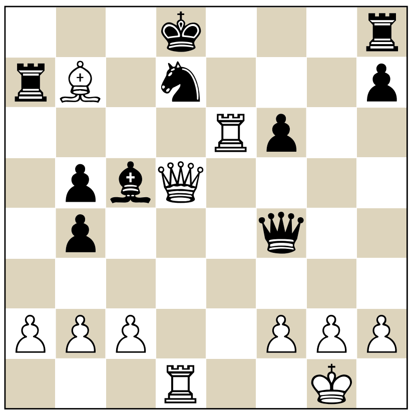
15.♗xd5

Open lines and an exposed enemy king were an awesome cocktail in the hands of Mikhail Tal.



15...gxf6 The attempt to exchange White's menacing rook by 15...♖a6 can be met by 16.fxg7 ♗xg7 17.♗g5+ ♔c8 18.♗f4! ♗xd5 19.♖xa6 ♕b7 20.♖d6, which is very strong.

16.♗f4! Rapid development with gain of time, just like Tal's hero Paul Morphy. **16...♕xf4 17.♗xb7 ♖a7 18.♕d5 ♗c5 19.♖d1!** Threatening mate in one.

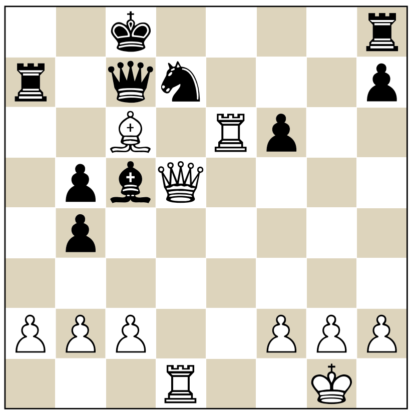


19...♕c7 20.♗c6

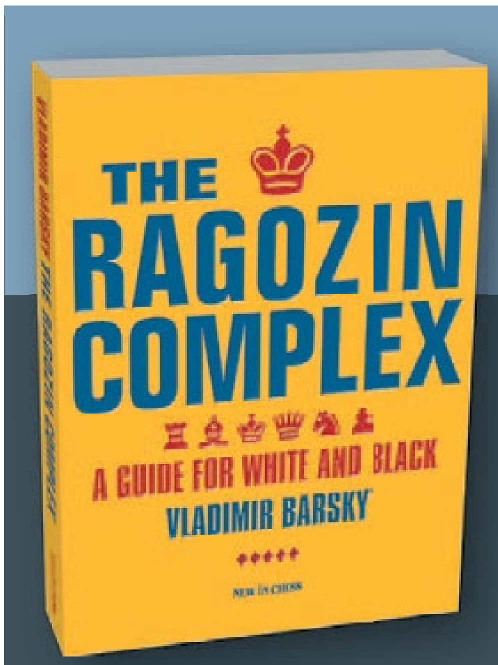
Piling up on the black knight.

20...♔c8 Attempting to unpin the knight.

On 20...♗b6 21.♕f5 ♖f8 22.♗xd7 ♕xd7 23.♖ed6 ♖f7 24.♕xb5 decides.



21.♗xd7+



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Also 21.♕f5 ♖d8 22.♖xd7 ♖xd7 23.♖e8+ ♕d8 24.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 25.♕xc5+ wins.

21...♕xd7 22.♖c6+ ♔d8

22...♔b8 23.♕xd7 ♖xd7 24.♖xd7 also wins. The rest is easy.

23.♖xc5 ♕xd5 24.♖cxd5+ ♔e7 25.♖xb5 ♖xa2 26.♖xb4 ♖d8 27.♖b7+ ♔e6 28.♖e1+ ♔f5 29.c3 ♖d2 30.♖b1 h6 31.h3 ♔e4 32.♖b4+ ♔d3 33.♖d4+ ♔c2 34.♖xd2+ ♔xd2 35.b4 ♔c2 36.♖e1 ♔xc3 37.♖e6 Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

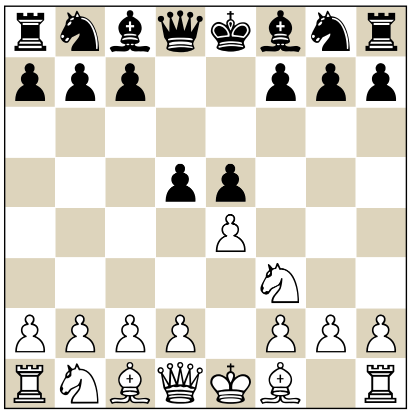
In the exhibition, Tal lost four games – of which the best was against the young Cedars player, David Mabbs, who refused to be overawed by his redoubtable opponent and just stood his ground, trading blows, one after the other, in the opening, middlegame and ending. And in the end it was the grandmaster, not the amateur, who was knocked out.

KP 1.9 – C40
Mikhail Tal
David Mabbs
London 1964, simul John Lewis

(notes by David Mabbs)

Tal was my hero at the time because of his spectacular sacrificial play. My other and long-standing hero was Capablanca – this might seem an unlikely duo, but I have always admired José's elegant, systematic yet ruthless positional skills. The real trick must be to marry both skills.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d5



I specialised in 'unsound' openings: here it gets Tal into less familiar territory, and I start attacking him before he can attack me.

3.♘xe5

Later this year (Tal v Lutikov, Tallinn 1964) Tal chose the more patient 3.exd5 e4 4.♕e2. This is a clearer way of answering the Queen's Pawn Counter-Gambit, and I should like to think that our simultaneous game was in the back of Tal's mind.

3...dxe4 4.♗c4

The sharpest continuation 4.d4 is often suggested, proposing the continuation 4...♗d6, but after 5.♗c4 ♗xe5? the intermediate move 6.♕h5 gives White a very comfortable position, so I prefer 4...♘d7 for Black.

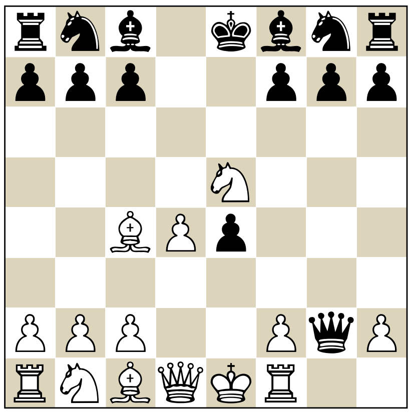
4...♕g5

The main line. 4...♕d4 may be tempting but it allows the white queen unopposed access to h5.

5.d4

Capturing on f7 would leave White woefully overextended.

5...♕xg2 6.♖f1



6...♘d7

There is an element of bluff to this move. 'Book' would be 6...♗h3.

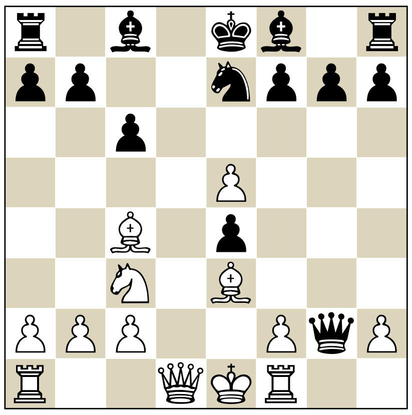
As played, White can continue with 7.♘xf7. For example, 7...♘b6 8.♕h5 so as to answer 8...♘xc4 with 9.♘d6+ ♔d7 10.♕e8+ ♔xd6 11.♗f4+ ♔d5 12.♘c3+ etc. or 8...♘f6 with 9.♕e5+ ♗e7 10.♘xh8 and if 10...♘xc4 11.♕b5+.

Faced with complications and possible traps, most simultaneous players will go instead for a move that *cannot* be bad, therefore (as I anticipated) Tal does not call my bluff.

7.♘c3 ♘xe5 8.dxe5

White is now threatening 9.♘b5 (as well as either 9.♘d5 or 9.♕d5), therefore...

8...c6 9.♗e3 ♘e7



10.♕d2

White wishes to double on the d-file. In this line, as played, Black is obliged to continue with 10...♗g4 (as in the game) and *not* with 10...♘f5, which

'Misha made the evening a chess spectacular and was not shy to admit "There are two types of sacrifice in chess: Tal ones and sound ones".'

'If Tal were alive today, he would not need to carry around a laptop with an analysis engine. He *was* an analysis engine!'

would be answered by 11.♘b5! which wins at once.

If instead White had tried 10.♕d4, then 10...♘f5 would hold after 11.♕xe4 ♕xe4 12.♘xe4 ♗e7 13.0-0-0 ♗e6 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♗c5 ♖f8.

The interesting line after 10.♕d4 is 10...♗g4 which in this line (unlike the game) is refuted by 11.f3! so that if 11...♗xf3 12.♖d1 (12...♗xd1 13.♗xf7 mate) 12...♕g4 13.e6 fxe6 14.♕d7+ ♔f7 15.♖d6 winning at once.

Alternatively if 11...exf3 12.♖g1 ♖d8 13.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 14.♕xd8 ♕h3 15.♘e4 winning.

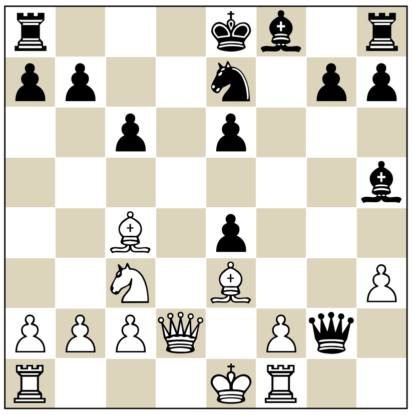
10...♗g4 11.h3

Forcing the bishop to choose between long and short diagonal.

11...♗h5

If 11...♗xh3 12.0-0-0.

12.e6 fxe6



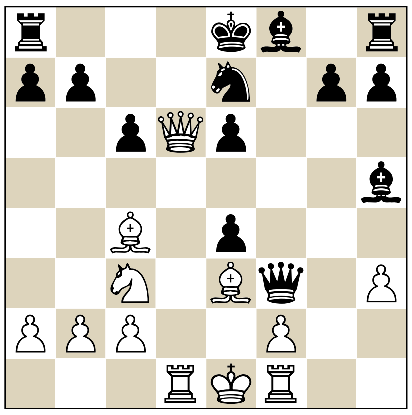
13.♕d6

The alternative 13.♗xe6 leads to interesting lines after 13...♖d8 14.♗d4 (threatening 15.♕e3).

13...♕f3

Black will shortly free his game.

14.♖d1



Allowing a tactic.

14...♕xd1+ 15.♘xd1 ♖d8 16.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 Curious how both queens have given themselves up symmetrically for rooks.

17.♘c3

Leaving three black pawns *en prise*.

17...♗f3 Important to keep this stronghold. Black now has threats of ...♗g2 and then ...♗xh3.

18.♗xe6 ♘c8 19.♖g1

Saving the h-pawn, so now...

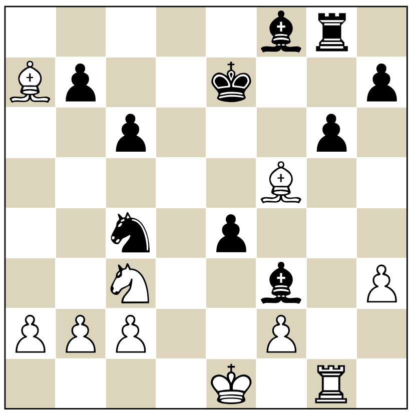
19...♘d6

Active play is essential. In the early part of this endgame White presses too hard to avoid a draw, and underestimates Black's counter-chances

20.♗d4 ♔e7 21.♗g4 ♖g8 22.♗xa7 ♘c4 23.♗f5

Looking strong, but this is a critical moment and Black is OK.

23...g6



24.♗xe4

White would have liked to play 24.♘xe4 but this would have been answered with 24...♗h6!. For example, 25.♖g3 ♘e5 26.♗d4 ♖d8 winning.

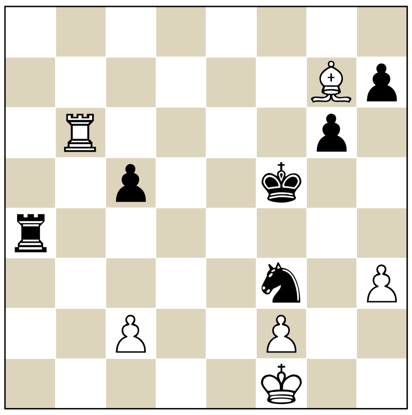
24...♗xe4 25.♘xe4 ♘xb2 26.♔e2 ♗g7 27.♖g3 ♘c4 28.♗c5+ ♔e6 29.♖d3 ♖e8 30.a4 b6 31.♗b4 c5 32.♗c3 ♔f5

The black knight will prove a better piece than the white bishop.

33.♗xg7 ♖xe4+ 34.♔f1 ♘e5 35.♖d6

If instead 35.♖d5 then 35...♔e6 36.♖d8 ♖xa4 37.♖e8+ ♔f7.

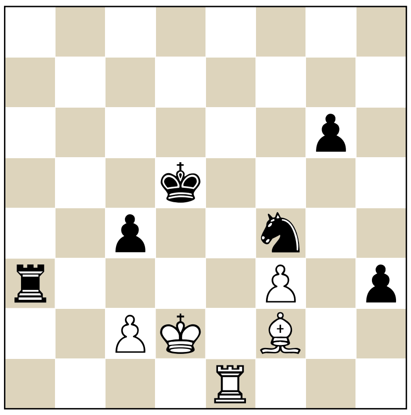
35...♖xa4 36.♖xb6 ♘f3



37.♔e2

This looks at first sight like a mistake, but the 'obvious' 37.♖b5 does not make progress after 37...♖c4 38.♗f8 ♘d2+ 39.♔e2 ♘e4 which seems to force the passive 40.♖b2, after which the kingside pawns look very vulnerable after moves such as 40...♖c3. So White seeks greater activity.

37...♘g1+ 38.♔d2 ♘xh3 39.♖c6 c4 40.♔c3 h5 41.♗d4 ♘f4 42.♔d2 h4 43.f3 h3 44.♖c5+ ♔e6 45.♖e5+ ♔d6 46.♖e1 ♔d5 47.♗f2 ♖a3

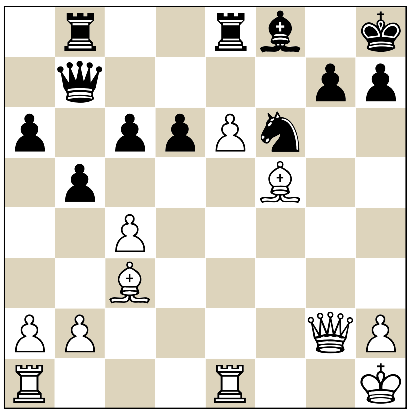


48.♖h1 48...c3+ was threatened, then 49.♔e3 ♘g2+ or 49.♔c1/d1 ♖a1 mate. **48...♖xf3 49.♗h4 c3+ 50.♔d1 ♔e4 51.♗g5 ♔f5 52.♗d8** White resigned.

■ ■ ■

Another Cedars player, Norman Stephenson, wrote: 'I can still recall being filled with admiration for both the chess and the man himself. As early as the 8th move it was 'end-of-theory' for me and I'd already been completely discombobulated on the previous turn, when Misha had captured my nearly-full pack of Chesterfield cigarettes (I think 007 smoked them too) and I was left with his foul-smelling, ugly-looking, loose-packed Soviet-type things in their place. But he was so charming that day, we could have forgiven him anything.'

Norman's game, like so many others, had some nice touches.



Mikhail Tal – Norman Stephenson
London 1964 simul John Lewis
position after 28...♖ab8

An immediate 29.♖g1 allows 29...c5 exchanging queens, so...

29.c5! dxc5 30.♖g1
Threatening 31.♗xf6 gxf6 32.♕g8 mate.

30...♗d6?
Black should play 30...♕e7, to meet 31.♗xf6 with 31...♕xf6.

31.♕h3
31.♗xh7 ♔xh7 32.♗xf6 was also possible, since 32...gxf6 33.♕h3 is mate.

31...♕e7
Better is 31...♖f8, but 32.♖ad1 ♖bd8 (32...♗f4 33.♗xf6 gxf6 34.♖d7 wins) 33.♗xf6 gxf6 34.♕h6 will still be too much for Black to handle.

32.♖xg7!
Black resigned, since 32...♕xg7 33.♗xf6 ♕xf6 34.♕xh7 is mate. And equally hopeless is 32...♔xg7 33.♖g1+ ♔h8 34.♗xf6+ or 33...♔f8 34.♕h6+.

And there was a sequel to this story. In concentrating so intensely on the games, Tal would sometimes absent-mindedly leave his newly acquired Chesterfields on the table when moving on to the next player. Three or four times he scooted back and forth to collect them, but on one occasion, totally absorbed in the position at hand but realising he was out of ammunition, he again automatically reached out for his opponent's cigarettes. However, this time he only took one, not the whole packet, and calmly put it between his lips and leant forward for a light! To which his opponent, equally transfixed by the position and utterly oblivious to the daylight robbery, obligingly responded with a click of his lighter.

Tal later commented on the playing conditions at Hastings. He said he could only imagine how many blunders and brilliancies lay hidden from view under the dense cloud of cigarette smoke that covered the boards of professionals and amateurs alike. However what he did not mention was that he himself was a significant contributor to the smoky atmosphere, which likened the tournament hall to a real battlefield!

■ ■ ■

Misha continued to march on with his simultaneous display, unloading a variety of tactical devices. But at one point he was seen to be taking longer than usual over his move. The spectators were confused. There was a straightforward winning line – one, two, three and the opponent was done for. What was the maestro thinking about? Then, to their complete surprise, Tal suddenly stepped back to the previous board! He had actually still been thinking about that game. He was now reconsidering the position...You could almost hear his brain ticking away...Yes, everything was okay...He was satisfied after all. So, without further delay, he returned to his patiently waiting but rather bemused opponent and delivered the final telling blows...

Misha's final score in the exhibition was +12 –4 =8. It should perhaps not be overlooked that he was also suffering from a cold, which he had picked up at Hastings, but, like any self-respecting entertainer, he recognised that 'the show must go on'.

■ ■ ■

When the exhibition was over, I overheard Latvian artist Arnold Mazitis asking Bob Wade where they should take Tal for a meal and then mentioning another simultaneous exhibition that Tal was giving the next day at Westminster School against London Junior Championship prize-winners. I didn't need telling twice and there and then decided I would go along to watch Tal for a third time.

Just as I was leaving the auditorium I heard a loud voice in the background. An older, smartly dressed gentleman was giving his assessment of the evening: 'When Capablanca and Alekhine gave a simultaneous display it was an education...' This, I later learned, was Wilf Pratten, John Lewis's strongest player, who at that time happened to be writing a book on 'The Golden Age of Chess', which he considered to be the years between the two world wars, when his two heroes were in their prime. By comparison, he was not too impressed with Tal's risky style, even though he had become one of his victims in an opening from an even earlier age: 1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 g5 4.h4 g4 5.♘e5 h5 6.♗c4 ♘h6 7.d4 d6 8.♘xf7...

Needless to say, I had a completely different view of the matter. As far as I was concerned, Misha had given everything to make the evening a chess spectacular. And, anyway, even he himself was not shy to admit: 'There are two types of sacrifices in chess: Tal ones and sound ones'.

Indeed, already a few years before, in an interview conducted by a Belgrade newspaper during the 1959 Candidates' tournament, the virtually indestructible Vasily Smyslov branded Tal's combinations 'tricks', and he was going to punish him. Yet, the next day, he too succumbed to a speculative sacrifice made by his wily opponent. The newspaper headline then read: 'When the irresistible force met the immovable object – the immovable object moved!'

Then again, Viktor Kortchnoi proclaimed: 'Tal's uncompromising style of play delights chess enthusiasts, and they are won over by his desire and ability to take risks and even bluff his way through. At the same time, Tal's skill in building up his game is inadequate and is often based on routine assessments and routine methods. I consider the genuine masters of attack to be Alekhine, Keres and Spassky.' Well, with an official lifetime tournament and match score against Tal of 13 wins against only 4 losses, Viktor's views must be taken seriously into account. Coincidentally, someone asked Tal directly at the exhibition: 'Why do you keep losing to Kortchnoi?' – upon which Misha held his head in his hands in mock despair and replied with a sense of utter hopelessness: 'I don't know!' But this was 1964 and we should hasten to add that throughout the last 20 years of Tal's career these two great players were evenly matched with 2 wins apiece and about a dozen draws.

We can also take Tal's skill at speed chess as a measure of his colossal tactical ability. At the 'World Blitz Championship' held in Yugoslavia 1970 and won overwhelmingly by Fischer, Tal finished runner up thanks to his 2-0 score against third placed Kortchnoi. And even shortly before his death, when he was a very sick man, Misha still managed to defeat Kasparov in a blitz tournament in Moscow.

So, nobody was safe when Tal cut loose!

Though Tal's dare-devil sacrifices were frequently made purely intuitively he could readily switch back to precise calculation when it came to the job of finishing off a punch drunk opponent.

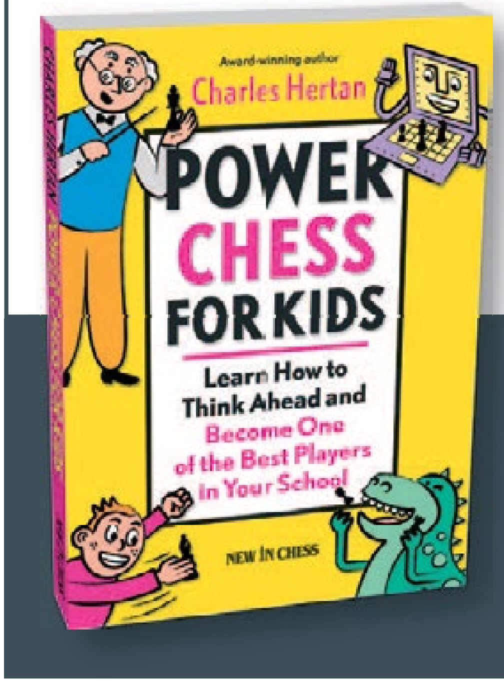
■ ■ ■

On the Friday I arrived in good time at Westminster School to see Tal play against the juniors. And yet again I had an incredible slice of luck. I was told by a kindly organiser that someone had dropped out and as I was a previous London Junior Champion myself, I could play in his place.

The fine hall of this traditional English school had a feelgood factor which set the tone for the whole evening. The mood was one of youthful optimism, not only because of the host of juniors taking part in the exhibition but also because of the wit, charm and friendliness of the grandmaster himself.

After a short welcoming speech Tal commenced the proceedings with his own version of a lap of honour. He made no moves on this first circuit but looked everyone straight in the eye and shook their hand. The joke going around at the time was that he had hypnotised all of us, so we would neglect our king safety!

Tal moved the chess pieces with his left hand. His right hand was malformed with only three fingers, which I heard was due to a wrongly admin-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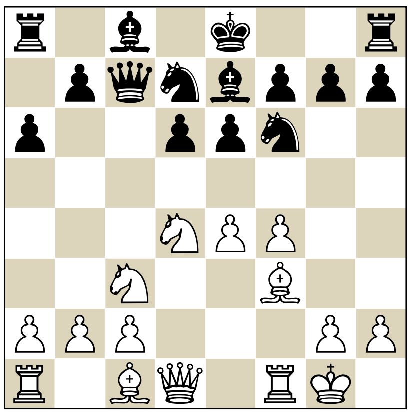
istered injection to his mother whilst she was pregnant. Not that this represented any particular problem for the young Misha, who played the piano and table tennis and was also a goalie for his school football team. More importantly he also used his right hand to hold his lighted cigarettes, his constant companion throughout the exhibition.

SI 23.4 – B84
Mikhail Tal
Jimmy Adams
Westminster School 1964, simul

1.e4 c5?
The decisive mistake. Peter Clarke, author of a splendid book on Tal's early career, introduced the term 'Sicilicide' – which I suppose either meant a clinical assassination of the opening by White, or a death wish by Black. I fell into the latter category and should have known better.

So, to repeat, it was a fool's game playing the Sicilian against Mikhail Tal. I could have defended with the Caro-Kann like Ray Keene a few boards away. After all, Ray won a fine game, with a queen sacrifice, which later appeared in his own best games collection.

2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♗e2 ♘f6 7.0-0 d6 8.f4 ♘bd7 9.♗f3 ♗e7



10.♗e3
In the early sixties, this variation was frequently seen, even in games played by top class grandmasters.

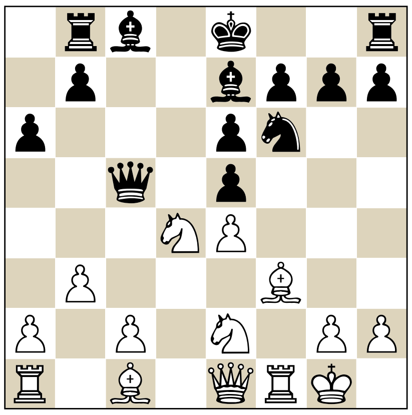
10...♘b6 11.♕e1 ♘c4 12.♗c1 ♖b8 At this moment I heard one spectator whisper to another: 'It's amazing how many people haven't castled yet!' I looked at my position: I was one of those people.

13.b3 ♕c5 Now I saw a trick and was tempted to go for it.

14.♘e2 Sharper than 14.♕f2 which might lead to an exchange of queens.

14...♘e5
Here Tal thought for a longer time than usual. Perhaps he had not come across my original knight manoeuvre before and was wondering why he couldn't win a piece...

15.fxe5 dxe5



16.♗e3
In the post mortem after the exhibition, all was revealed. Tal explained that he had previously calculated the consequences of 16.b4! driving back my queen. But when he arrived at the board on his next circuit, he simply forgot to play it!

Let's check the variations. Of course 16...♕xb4 loses a piece to 17.♘b3, as the b4 move has also created an escape square for the knight.

A) 16...♕a7 17.♗e3 exd4 18.♘xd4 ♕a8 19.♗f4 ♕a7 20.♕f2 ♖a8 21.e5 ♘d7 22.♗e3 ♕b8 23.♗xb7 ♕xb7 24.♕xf7+ ♔d8 25.♘xe6 mate.

B) 16...♕b6 17.♕g3 (this is better than ♗e3 now that the rook on b8 is unprotected) 17...♘d7 (covering the rook on b8) 18.♗e3 exd4 19.♗xd4 ♕xb4 20.♕xg7 ♖f8 21.♗h5 e5 22.♖xf7 ♔d8 23.♗xe5 ♖xf7 24.♗xf7 ♘xe5 25.♖d1+ ♘d7 26.♘f4 ♕xe4 (26...♕c5/b6+ 27.♔h1 ♔c7 28.♘d5+ wins the queen) 27.♘e6+ winning.

16...exd4 17.♗xd4
Now Tal has to find another brilliant way to win. No problem.

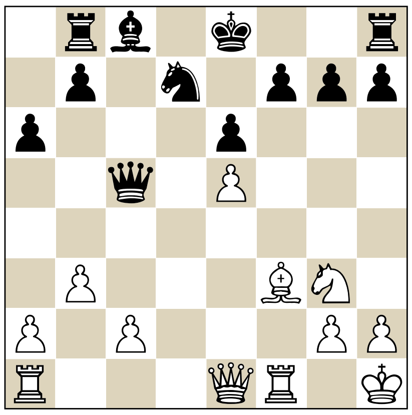
17...♕c7 18.e5

> 'I heard a spectator whisper "It's amazing how many people haven't castled yet!"...I was one of those people.'

18.c4 can be met by 18...♗c5. Anyway, for choice, Tal preferred to play with pieces not pawns, and his knight is heading for e4.

18...♘d7 19.♘g3 On 19.♕g3 I would have been able to castle.

19...♗c5 20.♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 21.♔h1

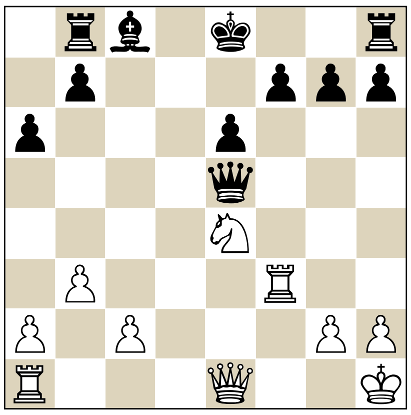


21...♘xe5
I was too eager to get rid of Tal's bishop, before he sacked it on one of his 'favourite squares'. However I should have captured on e5 with my *queen*, rather than my knight, either immediately by 21...♕xe5 22.♕b4 ♕c5 23.♕g4 0-0 24.♘h5 g6 or a move later after 21...0-0 22.♘e4 ♕xe5.

22.♘e4 ♘xf3 On 22...♕c7 I was concerned about 23.♕b4, keeping my king in the centre and intending ♘d6+.

23.♖xf3 ♕e5

I remember feeling very pleased with myself here. My queen is fantastically centralised, unassailable, and there was the very real possibility that the former world champion would now take the opportunity to play 24.♕b4, whereupon I would wrap up the game with 24...♕xa1+ delivering a triumphant back rank mate.



24.♖f5!! Massive heart attack. Needless to say, I hadn't got a clue that this was remotely possible until I realised that after 24...exf5 or 24...♕xf5 25.♘d6+ my game would fall apart.

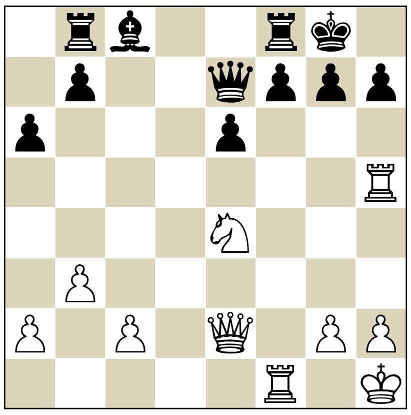
24...♕c7

If 24...♕d4 then not 25.♖d1 ♕xd1 26.♕xd1 exf5 which is not so clear, but 25.c3!, e.g. 25...♕d3 26.♖f3! ♕d7 27.♖d1 ♕e7 28.♘d6+ ♔f8 29.♘xf7 winning, or 25...♕d8 26.♖g5! 0-0 27.♕g3 with a double attack on g7 and b8, or 26...f5 27.♖xg7 fxe4 28.♕g3 ♖a8 29.♖f1 followed by ♕f4 or ♕h4 with an overwhelming attack against the king in the centre.

25.♖c5

Now my queen is driven from pillar to post, while Tal deploys his forces, with gain of time, for the final assault.

25...♕f4 26.♕e2! 0-0 27.♖f1 ♕h4 28.♖h5 ♕e7



29.♘f6+

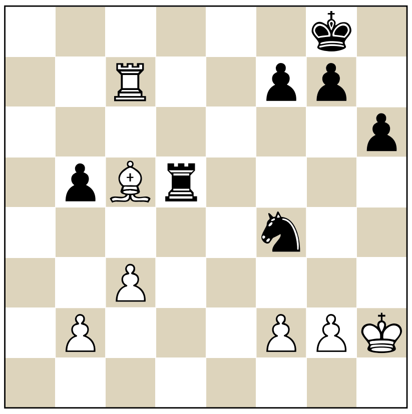
I resigned and shook Tal's hand for the second time.

After 29...♕xf6 follows 30.♖xf6 gxf6 31.♕g4+ ♔h8 32.♕h4 ♖e8 33.♖xh7+ ♔g8 34.♖h8+ ♔g7 35.♕h7 mate.

This was the only time I ever enjoyed losing a game!

■ ■ ■

Tal scored +12 –2 =6 against the London junior prize-winners. He drew for the second day running with future England international Bill Hartston and also halved the point with the two girl players taking part, Dinah Dobson and Linda Bott. Then, in addition to losing to Ray Keene, he showed us he was human after all by allowing a mate in one in the following position.



Mikhail Tal – D.H.Smith
Westminster School 1964 simul

Play continued:

30.b4 ♘e2 31.♗e3??

To protect the c-pawn, but...

31...♖h5

Mate.

After the exhibition, we transferred to a smaller room, where Tal went through our games with us, move by move. Each of us in turn sat down opposite him. He then looked intently at our faces for a second or two, after which he instantly recalled the moves of the game we had just played. I think it was at this moment that he also released us from his hypnotic spell so we could carry on with our lives as normal.

So, this is the story of how I became just another statistic in Tal's overwhelming percentage of wins against the Sicilian. When publishing such exhibition games, authors usually say 'Tal v NN' – a humbling experience.

It was the last time I saw Tal on this particular UK trip, but I did *hear* him – on the radio! You see, the next morning, on Saturday, Tal went to Broadcasting House to play a game, in partnership with Harry Golombek, against Yugoslav grandmaster Svetozar Gligoric and Jonathan Penrose, many times British champion. A full recording of this consultation game was serialised on the BBC's excellent weekly chess programme, which went out on air every Sunday afternoon.

Right after winning this game, Tal continued his hectic schedule by catching a train from London to Birmingham, where he had been invited to give a simultaneous exhibition against twenty local players. Although Misha slept for most of the two-hour journey, by the time he arrived at his destination he was wide awake and scored a convincing +16 –0 =4.

However he was so pressed for time that he had to cancel a second scheduled exhibition in nearby Wolverhampton on the following day. Instead he returned to London by car in the early hours of Sunday morning so as to snatch a few more hours sleep before boarding a 10 a.m. plane to Iceland where he, Gligoric and Gaprindashvili were about to take part in a tournament in Reykjavik.

I think someone should compile a collection of Mikhail Tal's exhibition games, such as have already been produced on José Raul Capablanca, Alexander Alekhine and Bobby Fischer. It would be a worthy memorial to the creative work of the magician from Riga and a dramatic reflection of his enormous love of chess. ■

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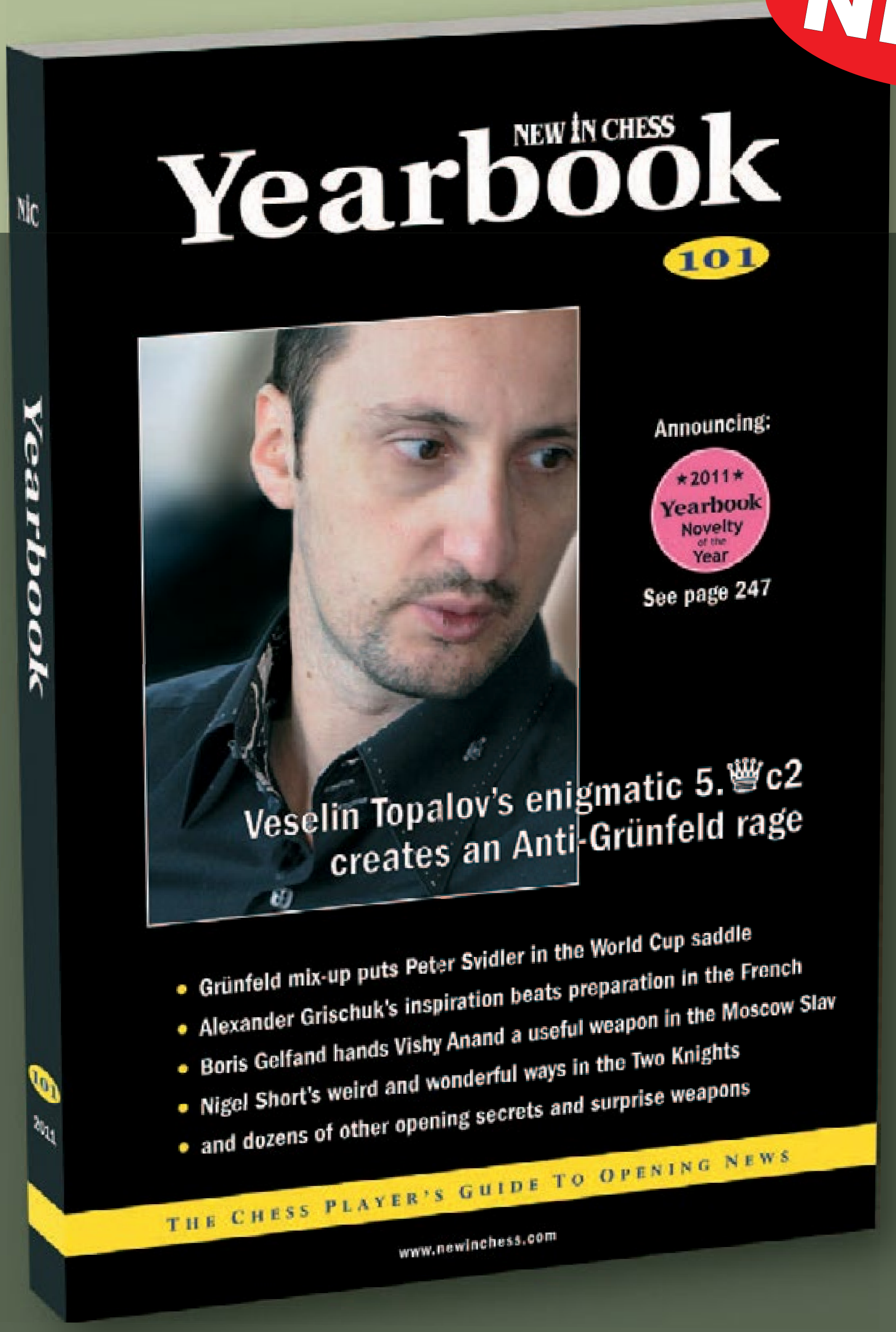
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SECRETS OF
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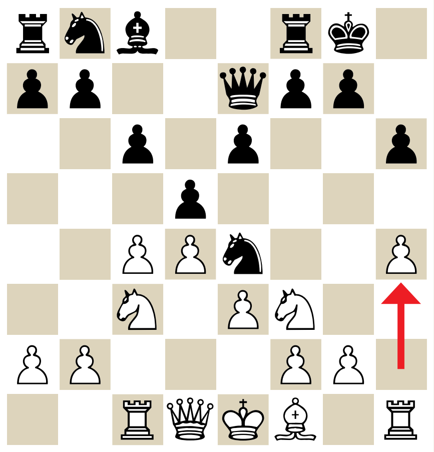
g4/h4 in the Lasker Defence

Jeroen Bosch

10.h4!?



The Lasker Defence of the Queen's Gambit is quite fashionable these days. As so often in chess the World Champion is setting the standard. Anand used this rock-solid line of the second World Champion to successfully defend his title against Veselin Topalov. Not only did he win the 12th and final game of their 2010 World Championship match, but later in the year he also repeated the line in Nanjing to score another devastating win against the Bulgarian. Former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik is of course another major adherent of Lasker's simplifying manoeuvre.

The summer of 2011 may have warmed the hearts of 1.d4 devotees though, as Levon Aronian came up with a remarkable idea that so far has brought White great opening results. In true SOS style Aronian goes h4 and g4 where previously players only considered such mundane matters as development and castling. Enjoy!

QO 14.14 – D56
Levon Aronian
Pentala Harikrishna
Ningbo World Teams 2011

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 0-0 7.e3 ♘e4

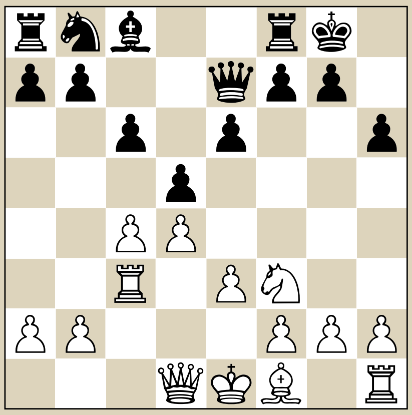
This is known as Lasker's Defence. Black aims to exchange two pairs of minor pieces, thereby relieving his game. As he has no weaknesses he aims to equalize in the early middlegame, often by means of ...dxc4 and ...e5 or ...c5.

8.♗xe7 ♕xe7 9.♖c1

9.cxd5 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 exd5 is another main line in the Lasker.

9...c6

This is thought to be more accurate than the immediate 9...♘xc3 10.♖xc3 c6, although play usually transposes. Interestingly, Aronian's idea had been anticipated in this position by Dutch grandmaster Jan Werle (albeit in a rapid game).



11.g4!? – White argues that the pawn on h6 is a clear target with Black already castled on the kingside. Moreover, after the exchange on c3 Black has no minor pieces developed just yet, so how is he ever going to profit from the 'weakening' g4? Indeed, there is no break in the centre available in reply to this audacious flank attack. 11...♘d7 12.♖g1 (12.h4 looks even better, and could in fact transpose to our main game, if Harikrishna had taken on c3 on move 11) 12...g6?!

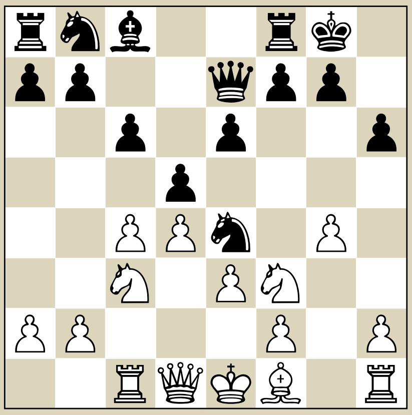
13.g5 h5 (13...hxg5 14.♘xg5, when 14...e5 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.dxe5 looks a little better for White, while 14...♘f6 15.h4 e5 or 14...♔g7 may be better) 14.cxd5 exd5 15.♗e2. Black has ended up in a position where he has no pawn breaks (...f6 or ...c5) without damaging his structure, Werle-Van der Werf, Leeuwarden rapid 2009.

10.h4

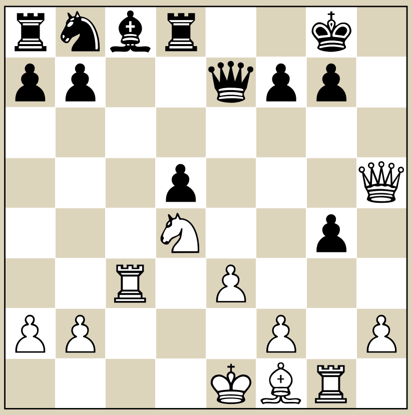
We have often remarked that moves like h4 and g4 in the opening are the hallmark of modern chess. Nevertheless, no one had actually dared (or perhaps even thought of) playing it in this respectable Queen's Gambit position.

However, once you are clever enough (or crazy enough?) to have come up with the idea, it may strike you that Black is not exactly in a great position to take advantage of this flank attack with the prescribed break in the centre. He simply has too little control over the central squares at the moment (the price of playing twice with the same piece in the opening and exchanging off his good bishop).

Indeed, had the opening been a Sicilian, where Black had castled kingside and had weakened his king with ...h6, then I think that we all would have started to embark on a flank attack. So hats off to Aronian for this original opening idea in SOS-style. And while we are at it, we might as well wonder if 10.g4 isn't playable as well?



The answer is not exactly blowing in the wind. In his 2011 first round World Cup match, Austrian GM Markus Ragger twice played this move versus Alekseev. Two draws were the result, but in both games Ragger was comfortably placed, to say the very least: 10...♖d8 (10...♘d7 11.h4 was played in Ragger-Alekseev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, a game with the regular FIDE tempo. Play transposes to the comments on move 11 in our main game. Note that 10...f5!? 11.gxf5 ♕f6 was a blitz game Halkias-D. Fridman, Warsaw 2010) 11.♖g1 (11.h4 c5 12.cxd5 exd5! was Black's main idea. Play is unclear, as Black has counterplay too: 13.g5 ♘c6 14.gxh6 ♕f6!) 11...c5 (the idea behind placing the rook on d8. Alekseev aims for counterplay in the centre) 12.cxd5 ♘xc3?! (12...exd5 has to be investigated too, of course. White could continue 13.g5!?, when 13...hxg5?! – 13...♘xg5 14.♘xg5 hxg5 15.♕h5!?; 13...♘xc3 14.♖xc3 hxg5 15.♘xg5 – 14.♘xe4 dxe4 15.♘xg5 favours White greatly, as 15...cxd4 is met by 16.♗c4!) 13.♖xc3 cxd4 (13...♖xd5 14.♕c2!; 13...exd5? 14.♖xc5) 14.♘xd4 exd5. White has a structural edge but he has to take care of his king in the centre, or so it seems. Ragger, in fact, demonstrates that it is Black's king who has all the worries: 15.g5! (very energetic!) 15...hxg5 16.♕h5 g4 (16...f6 17.♗d3 just wins for White)



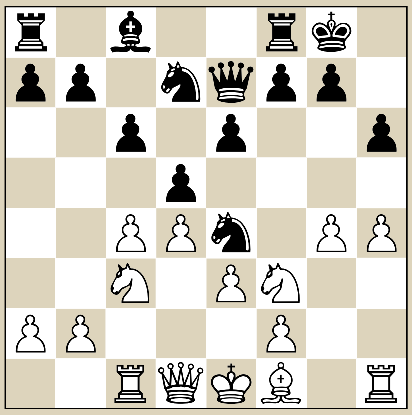
17.♖xc8 (a powerful sacrifice, but not the best one! Chess engines will prove that White is winning after 17.♗d3 g6 18.♗xg6! fxg6 19.♕xg6+ ♕g7 20.♕h5!! – this type of quiet move is difficult for humans to find. Black has no satisfactory defence against the threat of 21.♖xc8 and 22.♖xg4. The main line is 20...♘c6 21.♘xc6 bxc6 22.♖xc6 ♔f8 23.♖g6 and queen and rook join in a winning attack) 17...♖xc8 18.♕xg4 (and here 18.♗d3! was still good enough for a winning position after 18...♕b4+ – 18...g6 19.♗xg6 fxg6 20.♖xg4+– – 19.♔d1 ♘c6 20.♕xg4 ♔f8 21.♕xg7+ ♔e7 22.♕g5+) 18...♕f8 19.♘e6! (19.♘f5 ♘c6 20.♕h5 g6 21.♖xg6+ fxg6 22.♕xg6+ ♔h8 23.♕h5+ is a draw) 19...♖c1+! (19...fxe6 20.♕xe6+ ♔h8 21.♖g5 ♕b4+ 22.♔d1 wins for White) 20.♔d2 fxe6 21.♕xe6+ ♕f7 22.♕xf7+ ♔xf7 23.♔xc1 and White was a pawn up but did not win in Ragger-Alekseev, FIDE World Cup 2011 rapid.

– The boring 10.♗e2 ♘xc3 11.♖xc3 dxc4 12.♗xc4 ♘d7 is the main line, where White has not exactly been able to prove anything lately.

10...♘d7

Mikhail Golubev's 10...♖d8 is interesting. The idea is to transpose to our comments on Ragger-Alekseev above after 11.g4 c5 12.cxd5 exd5. Still, White does not have to lunge forward now. I would propose 11.♕c2!?.

11.g4

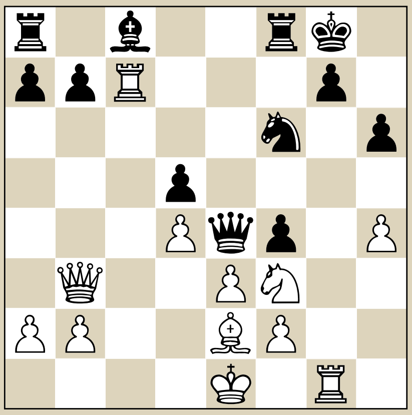


This position may also be reached via the move 10.g4 ♘d7 11.h4, as was the case in the game Ragger-Alekseev mentioned in the previous comment. Black is now at a crossroads.

11...e5

In principle the logical strike in the centre.

■ 11...f5 12.gxf5 exf5 (12...♖xf5 deserves attention, although I would not mind playing the position after 13.♗d3; 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♘d2 e5! 15.d5 ♘c5 is unclear but seems fine for Black) 13.cxd5 ♘xc3 14.♖xc3 cxd5 15.♕b3 ♕e4 (sharp, but otherwise White just has a sound structure and better development. 15...♘f6 16.♘e5 must be better for White) 16.♗e2 ♘f6 17.♖g1 f4 18.♖c7



and now:

– 18...♘e8? 19.♘d2! ♕h7 (19...♕f5 20.♖e7) 20.♕xd5+ ♔h8 21.♖e7 ♗f5 22.e4 ♗g6 23.h5 ♘f6 24.♕xb7 ♖ab8 25.hxg6 ♖xb7 26.♖xb7! ♕g8 27.♗c4 and Black resigned after a few more moves in Sambuev-Martchenko, Montreal 2011.

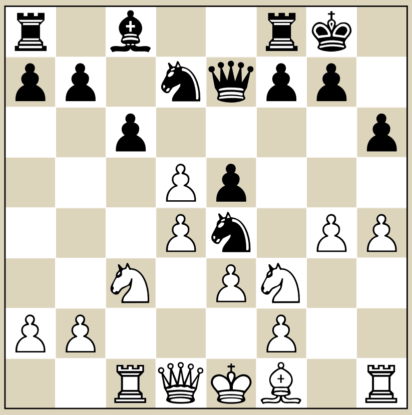
– 18...♗d7 19.♘e5 fxe3 was best, when play is unclear after 20.♕xe3 ♕b1+.

– 18...♕b1+? 19.♗d1 and Black has no satisfactory defence against the attack on g7: 19...♗d7 (19...♖f7 20.♖xf7 ♔xf7 21.♘e5+ ♔g8 22.♕b4+–) 20.♘e5 ♖ad8 21.♖xb7 fxe3 22.fxe3 ♕e4 23.♗f3 ♕xh4+ 24.♔e2, winning material.

■ 11...♘d6!? 12.c5 (12.cxd5 exd5 would open the e-file in Black's favour, while the knight on d6 is extremely well-placed. However, play is still interesting after 13.g5; 12.g5!? is a worthwhile try as 12...♘xc4 13.♗xc4 dxc4 14.gxh6 gxh6 15.♘d2 favours White) 12...♘e8 13.g5 e5! 14.gxh6 gxh6 15.♖g1+ ♘g7 (White keeps an edge after both 15...♔h8 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♕d4 f6 18.♕f4 and 15...♔h7 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♕xe5 18.♗d3+) 16.♗h3 (only equal seems 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♕xe5 18.♕d4 ♕xd4 19.exd4 ♗f5) 16...f5 (stronger than 16...e4 17.♗xd7! ♗xd7 18.♘e5) 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♘xe5 and a draw was agreed in view of the equal ending after 18...♕xe5 19.♕d4 ♕xd4 20.exd4 f4 in Ragger-Alekseev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

■ 11...♘xc3 12.♖xc3 seems like a concession, but may actually transpose to the game, while it is also relevant in view of the (less accurate) move order 9...♘xc3 10.♖xc3 c6 11.g4!? ♘d7 12.h4. 12...e5 (play is also sharp after 12...dxc4 13.♗xc4 – 13.g5!? – 13...b5 14.♗e2 – 14.♗d3 e5 with counterplay – 14...♗b7 15.g5) 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.g5 and we have transposed to the main game.

12.cxd5



12...♘xc3

Black finally has to exchange the knights.

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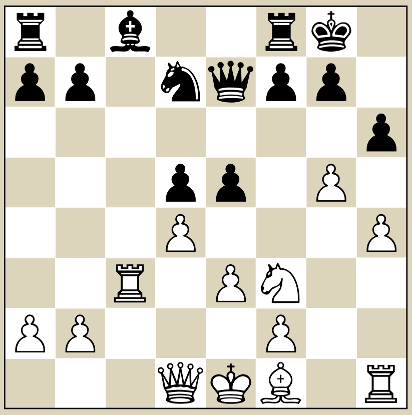
12...cxd5 13.♘xd5 ♕d6 and Black has no compensation for the pawn.
12...exd4 13.♕xd4 ♘xc3 14.♖xc3 cxd5 15.g5! with a superior position.

13.♖xc3 cxd5

13...♘b6 is met by the intermediate move 14.d6! ♕xd6 15.♘xe5 ♕d5 16.♖g1 ♕xa2 17.g5! with a strong attack.
13...♘f6 14.d6 ♕xd6 15.♘xe5 also looks worse for Black.

14.g5

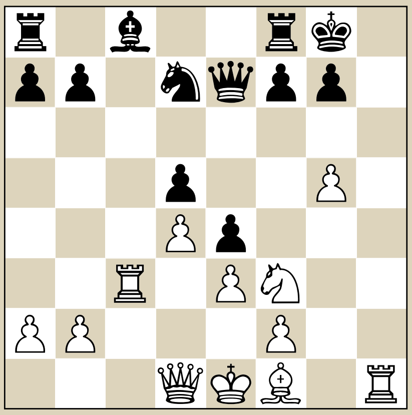


Everything according to plan! White has made contact with the enemy, while his position in the centre is still stable.

14...h5

Harikrishna understandably wants to keep all files on the kingside closed. However, pawn h5 is a further weakness, and even optically it is clear that White's opening has been a success.

■ A few weeks later at the Summer Universiade in China Kravtsiv played 14...hxg5 15.hxg5 e4, which looks extremely risky because of the opening of the h-file.



– Wang Hao now continued 16.♘d2?!, forcing Black to take the g-pawn, when the game went 16...♕xg5 17.♖h5 ♕g1 18.♖h3 (not 18.♖xd5 ♘f6, when Black is better) 18...♘f6 19.♖g3 ♕h1 but failed to obtain sufficient compensation. It was obvious that Black was better after the continuation 20.♘b3 b6 21.♔d2 ♗g4 22.♕c1 ♖ac8 23.♗a6 ♕xc1+ 24.♘xc1 ♖xc3 25.bxc3 ♖b8, Wang Hao-Kravtsiv, Shenzhen 2011. In the end the eventual winner of the silver medal managed to draw with white.

– More logical is 16.♘e5!, when after 16...♘xe5 (16...♕xg5 17.♖xc8 ♖axc8 – 17...♖fxc8? 18.♖h8++– – 18.♘xd7 favours White) White can take advantage of the open h-file with 17.♕h5 f6 (17...♘f3+? 18.♔d1 f6 19.g6) 18.g6 (18.gxf6 ♘f3+ 19.♕xf3 ♕xf6 20.♕xf6 ♖xf6 is an unpleasant ending for Black) 18...♘xg6 19.♕xg6 with a strong attack. After 19...♗d7 20.♕h7+ ♔f7 21.♖g1 ♖g8 22.♕h5+ ♔f8 23.♕xd5 White has retrieved his pawn with a better position.

■ 14...e4 15.♘d2 hxg5 can be answered by 16.♕h5 and this must be the reason why Kravtsiv first took on g5 before playing ...e4. White will retrieve the pawn and keeps a slight edge.

15.♗b5!?

The simple 15.♗e2 is also worth considering.

15...exd4

Black sees an opportunity to exchange queens and goes for it, but in the ending White's plus is indisputable.
Stronger is 15...e4 16.♗xd7 (16.♘d2 ♘b6! 17.♕xh5 a6 18.♗e2 ♗f5 and White has won a pawn, but this is a pyrrhic victory as the quality of Black's position has considerably increased over the last few moves) 16...♗xd7 17.♘e5 ♖ac8 18.♕xh5 ♖xc3 19.bxc3 and now after 19...♗f5 Black certainly has compensation for the pawn, although I would still prefer White.

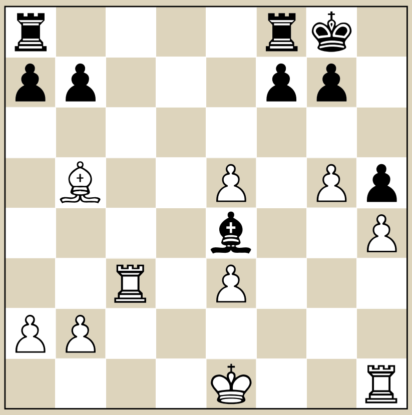
16.♕xd4 ♕e4 17.♕xe4 dxe4 18.♘d2 ♘e5

18...f5 keeps the pawn but places another pawn on a light square.

19.♘xe4 ♗e6 20.f4! ♗d5

White has a distinct endgame plus after 20...♖g4 21.♘c5 ♗xa2 22.♔e2.

21.fxe5 ♗xe4



22.0-0! Aronian follows Richard Reti's dictum that one should only castle once there is no better move available.

22...♗d5 After the exchange of rooks with 22...♖ac8 23.♖xc8 (23.♗c4!?) 23...♖xc8 White has 24.e6! fxe6 25.♗d7 to keep his edge.

23.♗d7 ♖fd8 24.♖c7

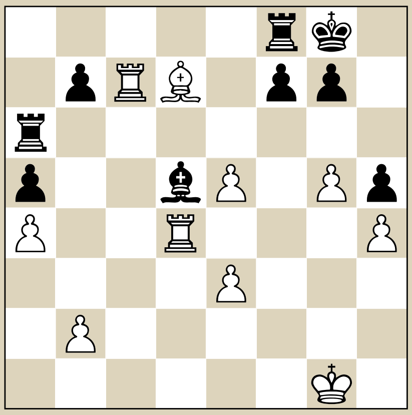
Black is virtually stalemated, and has to wait when and where he will be dealt the final blow.

24...a5?! White should win after 24...♗xa2 25.g6! fxg6 26.e6.

25.a4 ♖a6 26.♖f4!

26.♖d1?! is a self-pin and there is no point in allowing the rook ending after 26...♗e6 27.g6! ♗xd7 28.gxf7+ ♔xf7 29.♖dxd7+ ♖xd7 30.♖xd7+ ♔f8 31.♖xb7 ♖g6+! 32.♔f2 ♖g4 when 33.b4! should still win.

26...♖f8 27.♖d4



Now the bishop has to leave its optimal square, after which all is clear.

27...♗c6 27...♗e6 28.♖xb7 **28.e6 fxe6 29.♗xe6+ ♔h8 30.♗f7 ♖b6 31.b3 ♗f3 32.g6 ♖c6 33.♖xc6 bxc6 34.e4 ♗e2 35.e5**

A fantastic win after a completely novel idea in an age-old main line of the Queen's Gambit Declined. ■

Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

Holiday Cheer

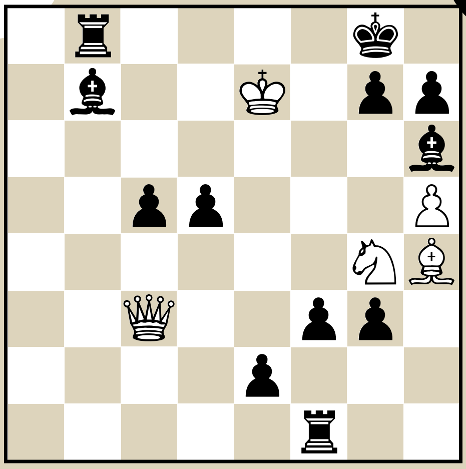
In the holiday spirit we present a sampling of chess curiosities, from the sublime to the ridiculous.
Bon appétit!

For each problem, the goal is to find the quickest and clearest winning line unless otherwise noted. A 'winning line' could range from checkmate to being a pawn up with no objective compensation for the opponent.

Level of difficulty:
1-4 stars, 1 is 'easiest' and 4 'most difficult'. The star rating refers to the difficulty of finding all the relevant variations, not just finding the right key move.

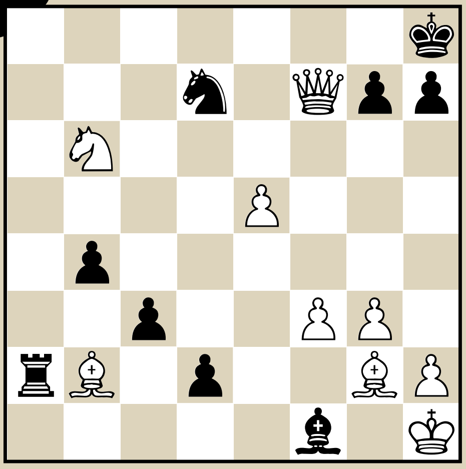
Solutions on page 98

1 ★★☆☆



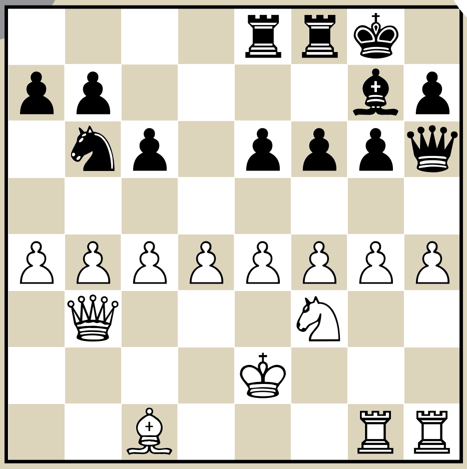
A slight technical lapse
White to move and win

2 ★★★☆



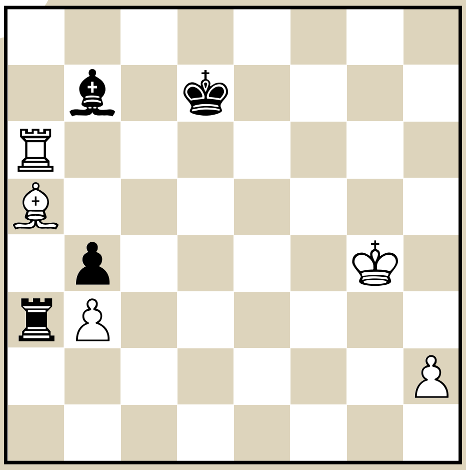
Monster shot
Black to move and win

3



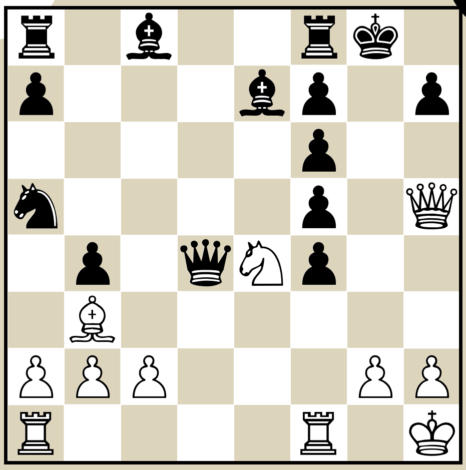
Space advantage
Laughs only – no solution

4 ★★★½



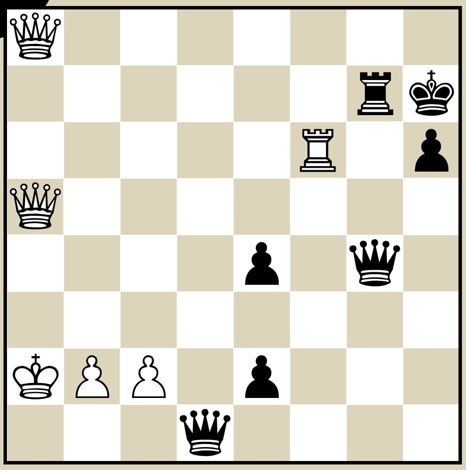
Stellar escape
White to move, Black draws

5 ★½☆☆



Structural defects
White to move and win

6 ★½☆☆



Ladies' night
Black to move and win

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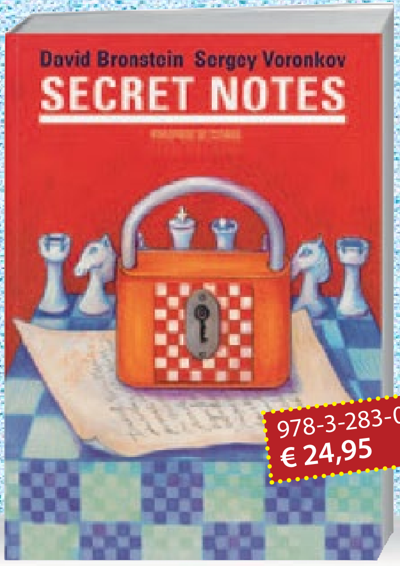
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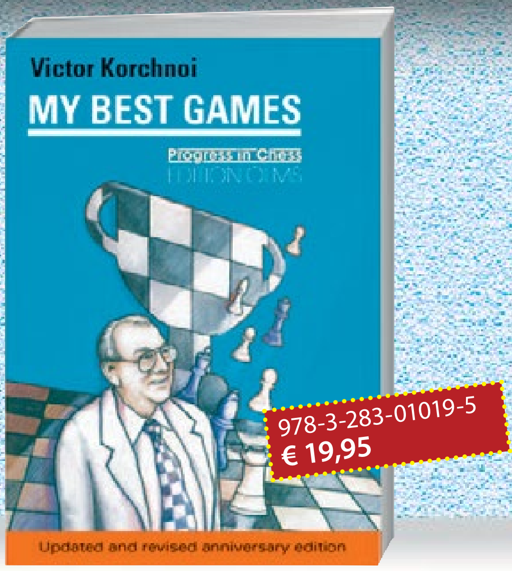
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Zhao Xue's Crushing Comeback

At the Women's Grand Prix in Nalchik, Zhao Xue demonstrated that she is still capable of the monster scores she was famous for at the beginning of this century (remember her 10/11 debut in the Bled Olympiad in 2002 and her subsequent gold medals in Calvia 2004 – 10/12 – and Turin 2006 – 10/13?). In the third leg of the current GP, in the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, the Chinese GM dropped her first half point in Round 7 after six straight wins, only to pick up the thread again with three further wins. In the last round Zhao Xue finally ran into her first and only defeat against her compatriot Ju Wenjun. With this win Ju Wenjun assured herself of second place, an incredible 2½ points behind the supreme winner. How happy she was with this splendid result, Zhao Xue will tell you in her notes to the following game.

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Zhao Xue: 'Hopefully, this Grand Prix is a brand new start to my chess career and I will keep fighting!'

NOTES BY

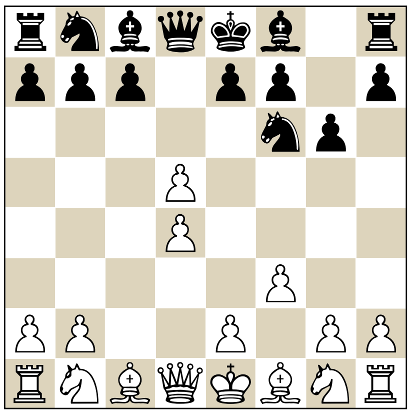
Zhao Xue

GI 1.1 – D70
Zhao Xue
Katerina Lahno
Nalchik 2011 (5)

This is the first individual championship, both national and international, that I have won since Bad Homburg in Germany in 2007. God knows how happy I am. I really can't imagine how I made it through these four years and three months. I am really thankful for those coaches and friends who always were there supporting me. Hopefully, this Grand Prix is a brand new start to my chess career and I will keep fighting!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3
This was the second time I went for this f3-system against the Grünfeld in this tournament.

3...d5 4.cxd5



4...c6!? This really surprised me.

5.dxc6 Played without spending much time, because I don't like 5.e4.

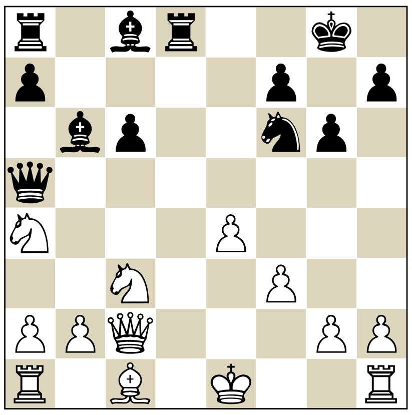
5...♘xc6 6.e3 e5 7.dxe5 ♕a5+ 8.♘c3 ♕xe5
Kate had played so quickly up to now that I believed she'd done her homework well.

9.♗b5 I just tried to find the most reasonable move.

9...♗c5 10.♘ge2 0-0
Kate wants to fight! After 10...♗xe3 11.♗xe3 ♕xe3 12.♕d6 she regains the pawn, but White keeps the initiative.

11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.e4
Now White is ready to play ♗f4, ♕c1, ♗e3 or some such move.

12...♗b6 13.♘a4 ♖d8 14.♕c2 ♕a5+ 15.♘ec3



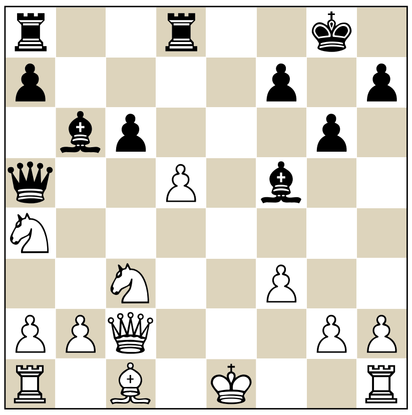
15...♘d5?!
A very brave and ambitious decision. I could feel that Kate was trying to play actively to gain the initiative.
However, 15...♗a6 would have given Black more chances: 16.♘xb6 axb6 17.♗e3 ♗d3 (after 17...♖d3 18.♗d2 ♘d7 19.0-0 ♕c5+ 20.♔h1 ♘e5 21.♗f4 White has an extra pawn and an advantage) 18.♕f2 ♘d7 19.♖d1 ♗c4 (in case of 19...♘c5 20.♕h4 ♘a4 21.♕f6 ♘xc3 22.bxc3 ♕xa2 23.♖d2 ♕e6 – otherwise White will play ♗h6 and give checkmate – 24.♕xe6 fxe6 25.♗xb6 ♖db8 26.♖xd3 ♖xb6 27.♔f2 ♖a2+ 28.♔g3 ♖bb2 29.♖g1 ♔g7 Black has some counterplay, but White still has the better prospects with her extra pawn) 20.♕h4 b5 21.a3 b4 22.axb4 ♕xb4 23.♖d2 f6 24.♔f2, with only a small edge for White.
White also has the initiative after 15...♗d4 16.♗d2 ♕e5 17.0-0-0 ♗a6 18.♔b1 ♖d7 19.♗e1.

Nalchik GP 2011 **cat. XI**

					TPR
1	**Zhao Xue**	CHN	2497	9½	2816
2	**Ju Wenjun**	CHN	2536	7	2605
3	**Kovalevskaya**	RUS	2421	6	2550
4	**Cmilyte**	LTU	2525	6	2540
5	**Lahno**	UKR	2554	5½	2502
6	**Zhu Chen**	QAT	2490	5	2472
7	**T. Kosintseva**	RUS	2536	5	2467
8	**N.Kosintseva**	RUS	2560	5	2465
9	**Stefanova**	BUL	2528	5	2468
10	**Galliamova**	RUS	2498	4½	2442
11	**Munguntuul**	MGL	2465	4	2408
12	**Kosteniuk**	RUS	2469	3½	2377

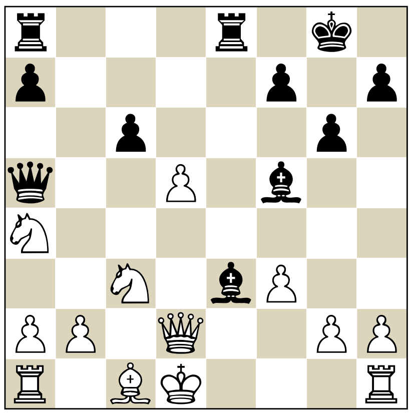
16.exd5
This is the only move, as White cannot allow ...♘b4 and ...♘d3.

16...♗f5



17.♕d2
This was my first thought.
I missed the better alternative 17.♕b3!, which might have given White some real advantage, for example: 17...♖e8+ 18.♔d1 ♗f2 (or 18...♗d4 19.♕c4 ♗g7 – after 19...♗e5 20.♗d2 cxd5 21.♘xd5 ♕d8 22.♖e1 ♖c8 23.♘c5 ♕d6 24.♘e4 ♗xe4 25.♕xe4 ♖c5 26.♘c3 White has a clear advantage – 20.♖e1 cxd5 21.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22.♕b5 ♕d8 23.♘c5 a6 24.♘xa6 ♗d7 25.♕b4) 19.♘e4 ♗xe4 20.fxe4 ♖xe4 21.♘c3 ♖d4+ 22.♔c2 ♖b4 23.♕a3 ♕c5 24.♖d1, and just like the other variations, this is not enough to compensate for the lost piece.

17...♖e8+ 18.♔d1 ♗e3

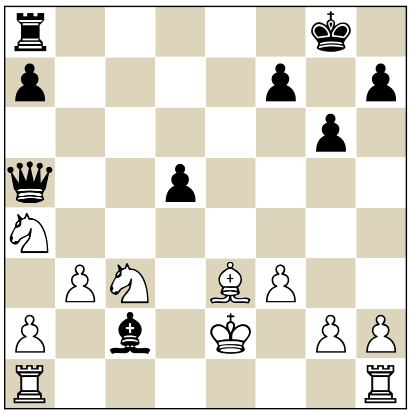


19.♕xe3 ♖xe3 20.♗xe3 cxd5 21.♔e2
When I played 17.♕d2 I thought White would have a big advantage in this position, so the earlier defensive moves did not take much of my time.

21...♗c2
This move I had missed, and once I

saw it, I realized that my assessment had been too optimistic.

22.b3



22...d4?!

During the game I was worried about 22...♖c8, when after 23.♗d4 ♕b4 24.♖hd1 ♗xd1+ 25.♖xd1 ♕d6 26.h3 I would end up in a position with three light pieces and a rook against queen and rook. I thought White should be able to hold this position, but no more. But after 26...♖d8 27.♔f2 ♕e7 28.♘c5 Houdini thinks White is slightly better ☺.

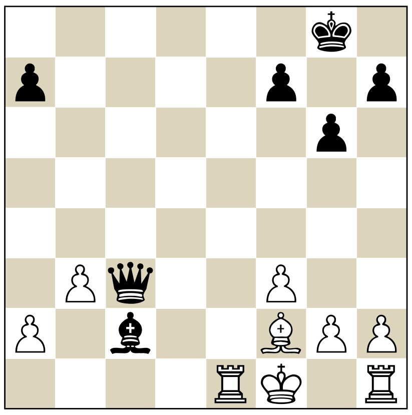
23.♗xd4 ♕g5 24.♔f1

Here I spent a lot of time, as I do not like to play passively.

Houdini thinks that 24.g3! would have been better, but I do not want to weaken my king's territory with the black light-squared bishop still on the board. Still, that move might have offered me better chances: 24...♖e8+ 25.♔f1 ♕d2 26.♗f2 ♖e3 27.♔g2 ♖xc3 28.♘xc3 ♕xc3 29.♖he1, or 24...♖d8 25.♗e3! ♖e8 26.f4 ♕e7 27.♘d5 ♗d3+ 28.♔f2 ♕e6 29.♘ac3, and White is better.

24...♕d2 25.♗f2 ♖c8 26.♖e1 ♖xc3 27.♘xc3 ♕xc3

It wasn't till now that I realized that White still has an advantage.



28.h4!

Ready to play h5-h6 and ♖h3. After this move it was clear to me that White has gained an obvious initiative.

28...h5

Black might have held on longer with 28...♗b1, e.g. 29.h5 ♗xa2 30.♖h4 ♕c6 31.♖c4 ♕b5 32.♔g1 ♗xb3 33.♖c8+ ♔g7 34.♗d4+ ♔h6 35.hxg6, etc. In this position with opposite-coloured bishops the safer kingside would give me the initiative, and I also have the advantage of the two rooks against the queen.

29.♔g1 ♕d2 30.♗g3

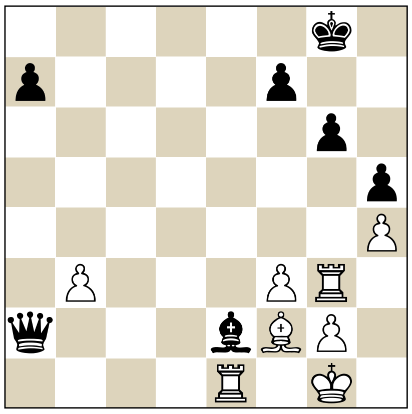
Perhaps 30.♖e8+ was the better move: 30...♔g7 31.♗e1 ♕d7 32.♖e3 ♗b1 33.a3 ♗a2 34.b4 f6 35.♔h2 ♗f7 36.♗g3 g5 37.♖c1 gxh4 38.♗xh4, when White has a decisive advantage.

Kateryna 'Kate' Lahno: spoiling for a fight.

30...♗d1

If I remember correctly, Kate was also under time-pressure, quite apart from the positional pressure.

31.♖h3 ♗e2 32.♗f2 ♕xa2 33.♖g3



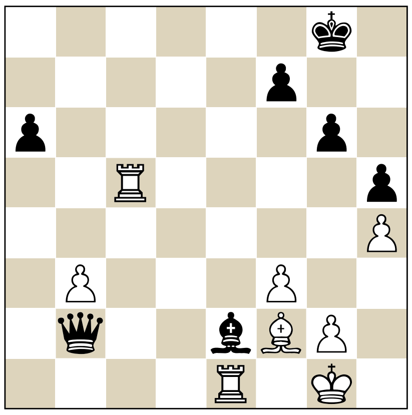
33...♕d2

She could have made my life more complicated with 33...♗b5!, e.g. 34.♖g5 ♕xb3 35.♗xa7 ♗d7 36.♖ge5 ♕b2 37.♖5e2 ♕f6 38.♗f2 ♕d6 39.♖e5, although I believe that White keeps good chances to break through because the black king is not safe.

34.♖g5 a6 35.♖c5 ♕b2?

A bad move made under time-pressure, but in this position it is difficult to find anything better.

Better was 35...♔g7, but after 36.♖c7 it is easy for White to keep the advantage.

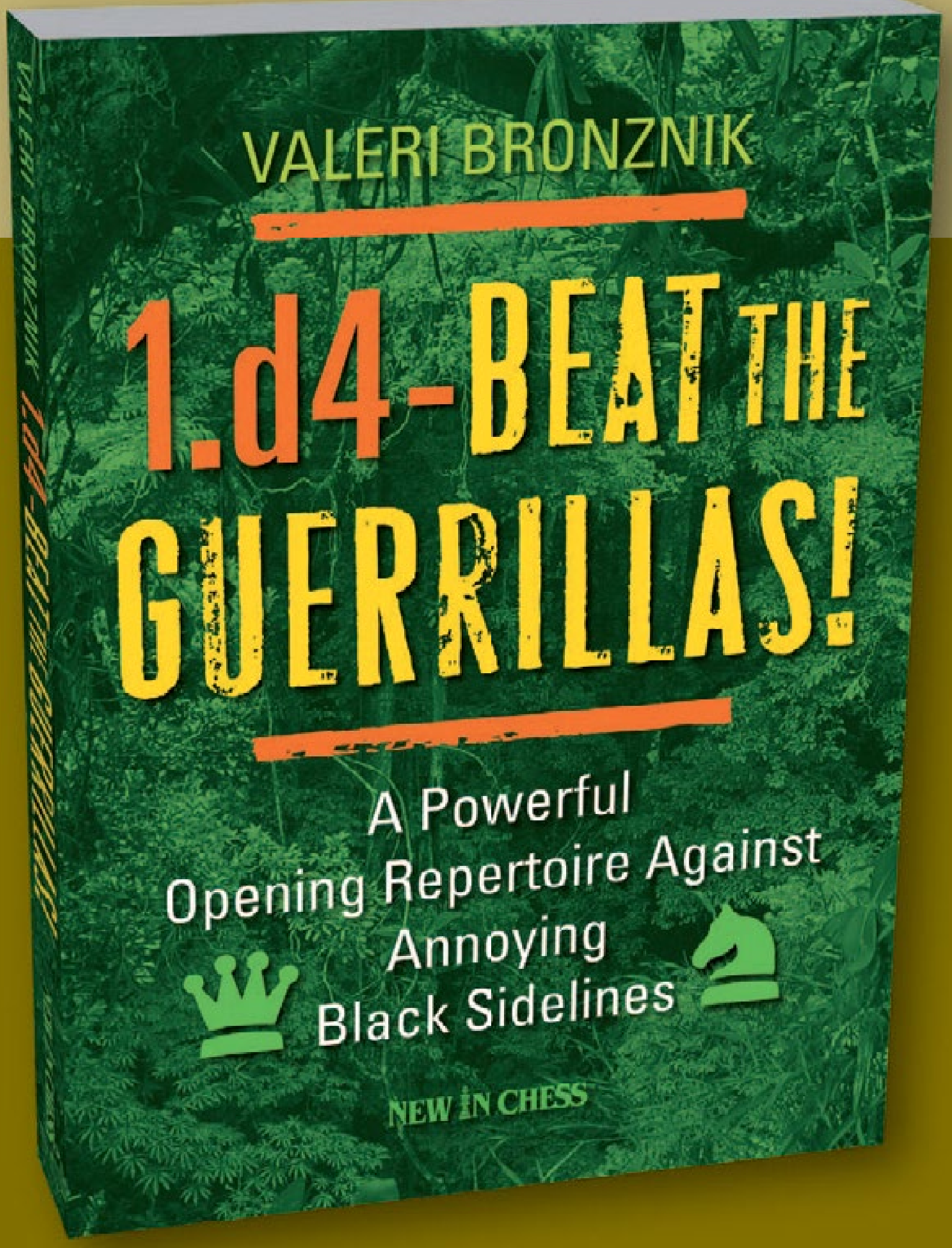


36.♖d5! This move decides. White is ready to play ♗d4.

36...f6 37.♖d7 g5 38.hxg5 fxg5 39.♗e3 ♗b5 40.♗c1

Black resigned. ■

Don't get ambushed in the opening!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A NEW IN CHESS PUBLICATION

Hans Ree

Paul and I

In a massive tome former World Championship Candidate Paul van der Sterren wrote the most revealing self-portrait of a chess player ever seen, with an honesty that Hans Ree sometimes found shocking.

> ‘While studying he had a portrait of Kortchnoi at the opposite end of the board, as if his opponent of the next day was already present.’

How well do we know our chess colleagues, after decades of battles and after-battle parties? The late Hein Donner, the Big Brother of the Dutch chess scene according to Genna Sosonko, used to say and write that chess, and games in general, were a way to find company while avoiding the perils of human intimacy. A way to meet without knowing each other.

The first game in my database that I played against Paul van der Sterren, who was born in 1956, is from 1975. We may have played some earlier games in club matches. Later there were many tournaments in which we both took part. In two Olympiads we were fellow-members of the Dutch team. Nowadays we are members of the same club in Amsterdam. So you might say that I've known him long and well, but that wouldn't be quite true. After reading this book, I realized that Paul, as he reveals himself in stark honesty, had always been quite different from the man I thought I knew. I had always found him a calm, friendly and highly objective man, who, I thought, smiled benevolently on the violent emotions of other chess players. The first three qualifications still stand, but now I know that behind this quiet exterior storms raged in his soul.

This is not a book review, because his book is in Dutch, which probably means that most of the subscribers of this magazine will be able to read it only if and when an English translation is published. I write about it because it is the most detailed and intimate self-portrait ever written by a professional chess player, and also because it evoked many memories, as our lives and chess careers often touched on each other.

The unfiltered past

The title is *Zwart op wit, Verslag van een schakersleven* (Black on white, a report of a chess player's life). On the cover it says that it was translated by the author from the language Ne5xf7?!, which suggests that in the life of a chess player the moves are the real thing, and that an autobiography in words can only be a rough translation.

The book has almost 500 pages, densely printed in two columns. In another format there could easily have been a thousand pages. There are many annotated games, but plain text predominates. It is about what he did, and particularly about what he felt.

‘Happy things can only be spoken of in a happy way, without grieving because they have vanished...’ I have quoted Nabokov's line here before. Of course it applies to sad things as well. It is almost impossible to speak about the past as it really was and not through the prism of hindsight. Happy things may have vanished. Sad things may have proven to be blessings in disguise. How easy it is to fall into the trap of colouring these events retroactively.

Van der Sterren is well aware of this trap. The motto of one of his chapters is a quote from the Dutch literary critic Kees Fens: ‘What we forget is reality, what we remember is the self-made story about it.’

He obviously has a very good memory, but in telling it how it was, he was assisted by massive documentation gathered over the years, consisting of diaries, press cuttings, personal travel reports and what he calls competition books, written after every tournament to sum up what the event had taught him about his strengths and weaknesses.

He is even able to quote the Dutch weather report of 17 March 1991: ‘A dull sky with occasional showers and sunny intervals. Not very windy and normal temperatures for the time of year.' This is to characterize his chess in 1991, in a chapter entitled *Simmering on a low burner*.

The big meat grinder

When he analysed his games in the past, either for himself of for chess periodicals, Van der Sterren did not use a computer. At first this was for the obvious reason that chess engines were too weak to make a useful contribution, but even later, when they had already become quite strong, he found it more interesting and profitable to use his own brain. For this book he hasn't computer-checked his old analyses either, and in fact doing so would contravene his apparent aim to show his past as it was then, not now.

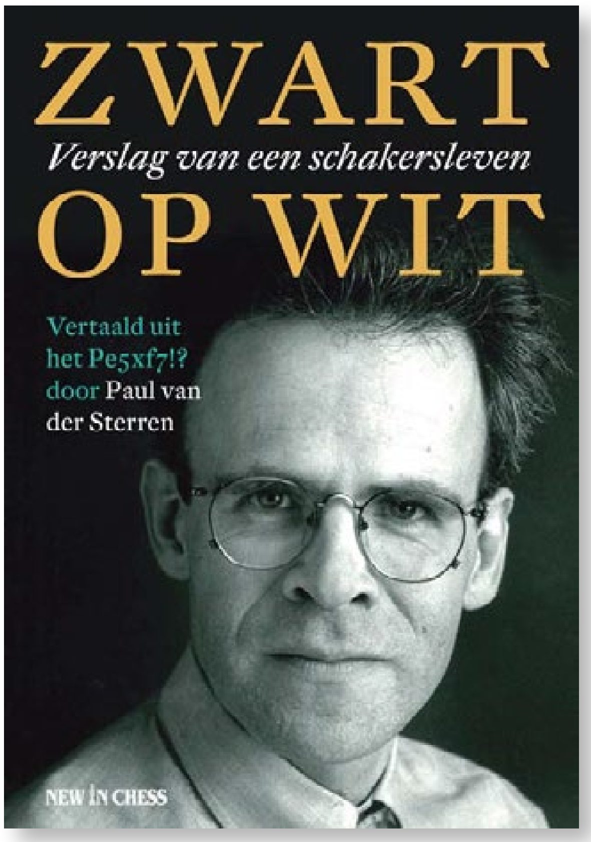
I have, in fact, always wondered why publishers who bring out classic game collections by great players of the past, seem to find it necessary to add an appendix with computer corrections of the old analyses. It doesn't add to our enjoyment to put these classics into what Van der Sterren calls 'The Big Meat Grinder of the New Era'. The effect is about as unpleasant as when a classic novel would be corrected by a modern stylist.

Earlier, when I wrote casually about 'our careers', I did not mean to disguise the fact that Paul's career had a much higher peak than mine. While I never managed to qualify even for an Interzonal, Paul qualified from the Biel Interzonal in 1993 for the Candidates' matches, in which he was beaten the year after by Gata Kamsky. Biel 1993 was a very strong tournament. Anand barely qualified on tie-break, and among those who did not make the grade were Shirov, Portisch and Ivanchuk.

By the way, that tournament figured in *John Nunn's Chess Puzzle Book*, in which Nunn, assisted by Fritz 5, did a blunder check to compare it with the classic tournament of Carlsbad 1911. Another prey for the meat grinder, but in this case with a sensible purpose: to compare the level of play of old chess and modern chess.

The progress of opening knowledge did not come into it; it was only a check on tactical blunders and grave mistakes. The old players of 1911 did much worse than Nunn had expected, and the level of Biel 1993 turned out to be incomparably higher than that of Carlsbad 1911.

One might think that the big difference was mainly caused by the different strength of the tail-enders, but this may be only partly true, as great players such as Rubinstein, Levenfish and Nimzowitsch also contributed to the blunder fest of 1911. Apparently, chess did progress in the 20th century, not only as regards knowledge and insight, but also in plain tactical ability.


ZWART
Verslag van een schakersleven
OP WIT
Vertaald uit het Pe5xf7!? door Paul van der Sterren
NEW IN CHESS

Voodooing Viktor

Van der Sterren makes it clear that there was a big divide in his career: before and after Biel. The part 'before' spanned more than 20 years. His career after Biel was relatively short, because already in 2001, just 45 years old, he put an end to it, although he kept playing some games for his club during the next two years.

Of course there is much in this book that I recognize from my own chess life. Sorrows and pleasures, the joys and anguish of chess. But with him everything seems to have been much more intense than with me, or at least that is how I remember my own chess life now.

When he played in a tournament, it seems that there was only chess for him. When I read his comments on the many tournaments that he and I both played in, anecdotes come to my mind, often really funny or enlightening. Usually not about me, and only once about Paul, but mainly about other players and organizers. Even now I chuckle when I think about some of them.

He must have noticed such incidents too, or did he? There are hardly any anecdotes in his book. During tournaments his mind is presented as a black box that was only involved with chess and with an incessant soul-searching about the way chess should be handled. There was often a pleasant walk before the game, there was a relaxing emptying of the mind on a park bench, that too, but these relaxations were also part of a strict regime. I was reminded of Botvinnik. There is an almost unbearable heaviness to it, which is to say that it would have been unbearable to me, not necessarily to Paul.

One example. In 1983 he prepares for a club match in which he will have to play Viktor Kortchnoi. Preparing an opening at home, in the quiet of his study, as Botvinnik would say, was one of the things he liked best. But while studying in this quiet relaxed atmosphere, he had a portrait of Kortchnoi at the opposite end of the board, as if his opponent of the next day was already present. It makes one think of voodoo. Did Botvinnik do such things? Anyway, Paul's preparation worked. Although Kortchnoi played a totally unexpected opening, he was still the man of the photo and Paul won that game.

Torture of heartaches

It is a tribute to his honesty that he doesn't hide this detail about the photo, because I think that in retrospect it must appear pretty weird to him, too.

Bobby Fischer once said to me laughingly when we were talking about Lajos

Portisch's stern work ethic: 'Yes, he is taking it too seriously.' I am inclined to say that Paul van der Sterren also took it too seriously, but the retort would be obvious. Isn't taking chess seriously and becoming a World Championship Candidate preferable to taking it more light-heartedly – relatively so, I hasten to say – and not even being able to reach an Interzonal? Yes, of course it is, I would answer, if the question was put like this. But still...

Paul started his chess life in Limburg, the southernmost province of the Netherlands. The chapter entitled *The first steps* is introduced by a quatrain of the Dutch poet Jacob Israël de Haan that sets the tone for the whole book. In my poor translation: 'Those that come after me, should read my quatrains./ They will tremble if they understand,/ With what torture of heartaches/I went singing through Life.'

Young Paul wrote down the games he played with his schoolmates and added annotations in a flowery style that he copied from a chess book, *Thieme's Schaakboek*, the same game collection that had been one of my treasures when I was a child. Once he cheated, writing in his notebook: '26...h5, and White resigned. He will lose a pawn and the threat 27...♘g4-f2+ had become too dangerous.' What's that, a schoolboy resigning because he will lose a pawn? In truth Paul, as Black, had not played 26...h5 but another move, and was mated on the back rank.

Like Paul, I used to write down and 'annotate' my feeble early games. I didn't need to cheat, because I freely invented games played between the formidable Hans 1 and the decent, though somewhat weaker player Hans 2, with occasional guest appearances of Hans 3 and Hans 4, whose ignorance illustrated some opening traps I had read about.

As for Paul, a delightful new world had opened for me. The heartburn came later, I think. For Paul it was to come soon. He writes: 'At such a moment you feel naked, undressed by the devastating emotions of disappointment, shame and powerless rage, even though you are only 16 years old. Your self-confidence is shattered.'

That this feeling came so early may have had something to do with what he calls 'the syndrome of the village champion'. Limburg was no chess Valhalla and he had little competition in junior events. So when he failed to win the Limburg junior championship and qualify for the national championship, a kingdom collapsed, even if the king was only 16. In Amsterdam it took a bit longer before one reached a height from which a fall would be painful.

Shocking honesty

Of course Paul escaped from the village champion syndrome and ventured out into bigger worlds. He became a chess professional, not because he decided on that career, but because at some point he realized that he had become one. Drifting into chess as a profession was common to Western players in my and his time. They had some leisure time to drift. Nowadays a conscious decision has to be made at a much earlier age than in the past.

Van der Sterren chronicles the ups and downs of his career meticulously, but of course I cannot follow him closely here. I'll pick some cherries, starting with an episode where his honesty really shocked me.

It starts at the Ohra tournament in Amsterdam in 1984, where Paul and I had a game that was adjourned in a rather complicated position that should have led to a draw. It seems to me now that he was the one needing accurate moves to draw, but Paul played for a win, blundered and lost. He writes that he descended into hell and continues: 'I cried, something that – as far as I can remember – I have never been able to do or needed to do at any other disaster in my chess life. But the sorrow that assails me, about my defeat, about the futility of my efforts, about what I have done to my beloved Queen's Gambit, about my career that is stuck, about everything and everything and everything, it flows out like a waterfall.'

Fortunately, it did not flow in my presence.

But his revenge was swift and sweet. Soon we were to meet again and Paul writes: 'Some part of your self-hate is directed at HIM, however unreasonable that may be. During the Dutch championship, just a few weeks later, that hate was still fresh in my memory.'

That game he won easily. His annotations (probably written in a private notebook at the time) contain sentences such as 'The Big Reckoning begins' or 'With unimaginable sadist pleasure I finish it now at my leisure'.

I really played badly in that game, which Paul explains thus: 'Maybe Hans felt something of the aggression, the enmity even, that I must have radiated.'

But really, I had no idea. Nor did I ever have an inkling of the fact that, as Paul now writes, although most of his thirst for blood had been satisfied, for years there remained a smouldering remnant of rage that made a win against me a disproportionately enjoyable experience.

Your Honour, what had I done to deserve this? I had won a game in which Paul had blundered. But to be fair, he makes it clear that I did not really deserve his anger.

But still, I am stunned. Was this the man who I had always considered a model of equanimity, far above such excesses of vile emotion? Perhaps I had fallen victim to the tendency of people from the North of the Netherlands to think of people of the Southern parts as much more good-natured than they really are. Like in a newspaper cartoon that I saw recently. A doctor says to a patient: 'We have bad news for you, but my colleague will tell you, as his southern accent will make it sound rather funny.'

The Candidates' match

As noted above, the highlight of Van der Sterren's career was his qualification for the Candidates'. He was eliminated in his first match by young Gata Kamsky, who was the general favourite and was also considered by Paul himself to be the better player. The result, 4½-2½ in favour of Kamsky, bears this out, but obscures the fact that the first part of the match saw fierce struggles.

I will give you the fifth game here, played when Kamsky was leading 3-1. I was tempted to write that the score should have been much better for Van der Sterren, but this is not something he would say. Things happen as they do, and saying that somehow they ‘should’ have happened differently doesn’t really make sense. As far as I remember after reading his book, he never stoops so low as to write that he ‘should have won’ a game, an expression so dear to many players, myself included.

My feather-light notes are just a tiny extract of the deep analysis in his book.

KI 37.4 – E88
Paul van der Sterren
Gata Kamsky
Wijk aan Zee 1994,
5th match game

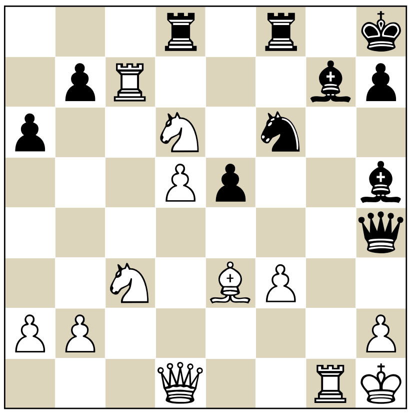
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.♗e3 e5 7.d5 c6 8.♗d3 cxd5 9.cxd5 ♘h5 10.♘ge2 f5 11.exf5 gxf5 12.0-0 a6 13.♔h1 ♔h8 14.♖c1 ♘d7 15.♗xf5 ♖xf5 16.g4 ♖f8 17.gxh5

Paul was always an opening expert, and here he has obtained a large advantage.

17...♕h4 18.♘e4 ♘f6 19.♘xd6 ♗h3 20.♖g1 ♖ad8 21.♖c7

A strong move. Black is walking on the edge.

21...♗g4 22.♘c3 ♗xh5



23.♖gxg7

The wrong rook, but that was extremely difficult to see during the game. Paul analyses 23.♖cxg7 to a win.

23...♖xd6 24.♗c5 e4

With what Paul calls ‘the diabolical 24...♘d7’ Black could have saved himself.

25.♖g3 ♕f4 26.♗xd6

Now he could have reached a technically winning position with 26.♖xb7 ♗xf3+ 27.♖xf3 exf3 28.♗xd6 ♕xd6 29.♕xf3, but he thought that the text-move would boil down to the same thing.

26...♕xd6 27.♖xb7 ♕xg3

But alas, it doesn’t. Here Kamsky can save himself.

28.hxg3 ♗xf3+ 29.♔g1 ♗xd1 30.♘xd1 ♘xd5 31.♖b3 ♖c8 32.♘c3 ♘xc3 33.♖xc3 ♖d8 34.♖e3 ♖d2 35.♖xe4 ♖xb2 36.♖a4 ♖b6 37.♔g2

Draw.

A great game, but it brought Kamsky a step closer to match victory. In the last two games Kamsky held a tight rein, coursing steadily through uneventful draws.

Paul thoroughly enjoyed playing this match. As the constant self-analyst he is, he writes that his mistakes in winning positions – Game 1 was a gruesome example – were caused by his unwillingness to take the winner’s role. As he sees it, his self-image prevented him from perceiving himself as someone who would win a Candidates’ match.

Dismantling the programs

And then, after this peak experience, what next? In the same year he plays the Lost Boys tournament in Antwerp, which he calls his last happy tournament. Winning at all cost becomes less important. A few pages later he writes: ‘You discover that the Devil is no longer at your heels, he has found other victims.’

Back into the ranks of ordinary strong grandmasters, he feels like a chef who has lost his Michelin star. He starts feeling pity for the opponents he beats. He had already found Western philosophy, and now he is writing poems in his notebooks and he discovers Zen. In 1998 he joined a small Buddhist meditation centre in Amsterdam, became a volunteer shortly afterwards, and then even a meditation coach. But he keeps playing chess and still dreams about chess.

The chapter about 2000-2001 is titled ‘A farewell tour’ and has as an introductory quote the Bible verse Luke 2:29: ‘If only at the end of my life I can die, it’s alright with me.’

This is a very down-to-earth version (Paul’s or that of a new Dutch Bible translation?) of a line that is more often given as ‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word.’ It’s about Simeon the Righteous, to whom it was prophesied that he would not die before he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ.

Allusions to death abound when Paul writes about giving up chess, although he also describes it as escaping from a prison. A common text on Dutch obituary notices is a poem by Nel Benschop: ‘Now rest, you have fought your battle,/ You did it as a valiant man./ Who can understand what you have suffered?/ And who can feel what you have endured?’

This text, well-known to all Dutch people, is not literally quoted, but obviously paraphrased by Paul. When he finally gives up chess, the simile he uses is that of the gradual dismantling of a computer. His brain is emptied of chess software. Sad.

But lo and behold, at the end there is a small poem entitled ‘Caïssa’: ‘But if you will call me again,/Tired of lovers that came after me,/Yes if you will call me again/Then I will be there again.’

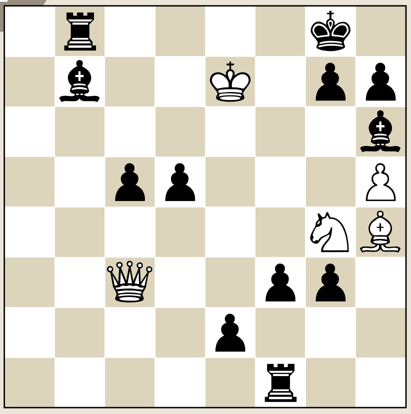
And indeed, after many years of abstinence Paul became a member of a chess club again in 2010, if only to play nine games a year.

This is an intriguing and sometimes strange book from a man who I had seen as the embodiment of normalcy. And by the way, I almost forgot to say that you can learn a lot from it about the Queen’s Gambit Declined and about some other openings. ■

Forcing Moves

Solutions of page 88

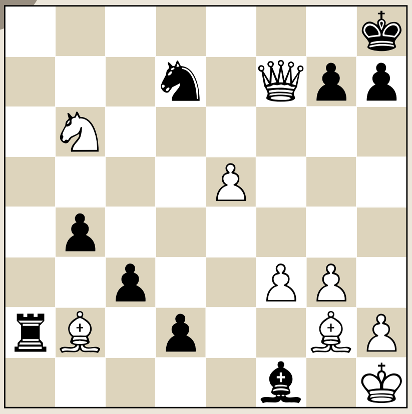
1



Deschapelles-La Bourdonnais
Paris 1836

Before making five queens, one should stop to analyse the variations: **1.♘xh6+ gxh6 2.♕h8+! ♔xh8 3.♔f7 ♖f8+ 4.♔xf8 e1♕ 5.♗f6** Mate.

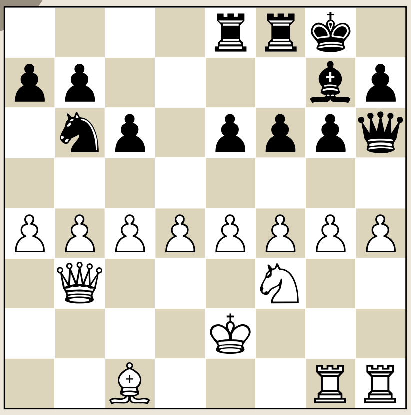
2



Katz-Fidlow
Correspondence game 1962

White soon had to resign after the unbelievable resource **1...♗c4!! 2.♕e8+ ♗g8**, foreseen many moves earlier by the winner. In those days we called this a 'correspondence move' ...

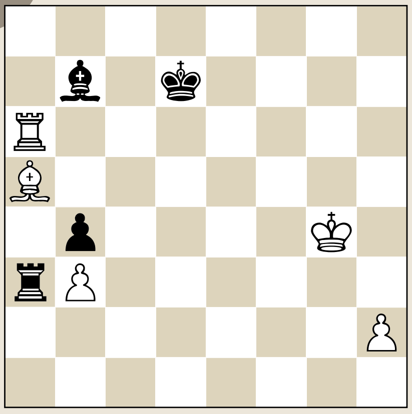
3



Alterman-Deep Fritz
Internet 2000

The silicon giant-slayer should have brushed up on hippopotamus theory, as White won convincingly. We fail to grasp the merits of Black's tabiya, but the human GM's sense of humour wins very high marks.

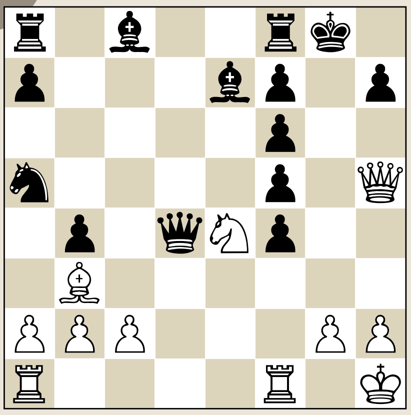
4



Delmar-Pollack
New York 1889

1.♖d6+! 1.♖b6? ♗c6 holds easily. **1...♔e7!!** A wonderfully random resource! All other king moves lose, including Pollack's feeble 1...♔xd6 2.♗xb4+. **2.♗xb4** Looks like lights out: 2...♖xb3? 3.♖b6+. **2...♗f3+!!** An ungodly saving move! 3...♖xb3 next holds, as Black is immune to discovered checks. Not 2...♗c8+, allowing the momentous double check 3.♖d7+!!+−. Draw.

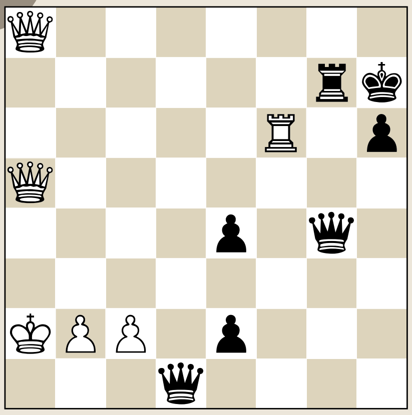
5



Fischer-Benko (var.)
Yugoslavia 1959

It's doubtful that this 'tall stack' of pawns can be topped in master play, even in analysis. White wins due to the loose knight(!): **1.♖xf4 ♕xe4** No time for 1...♘xb3 2.♖h4 and mate. **2.♖xe4 fxe4 3.♕xa5 1-0**

6



Mackic-Maksimenko
Yugoslavia 1994

Tim Krabbé's whimsical website dubs this the longest master stretch of five-queen play: **1...e1♕ 2.♖xh6+ ♔xh6 3.♕h8+ ♔g6 4.♕a6+ ♔f7 5.♕b7+ ♕dd7 0-1** The blitz finale would be 6.♕b3+ ♕ge6 7.♕h5+ ♔g8...?

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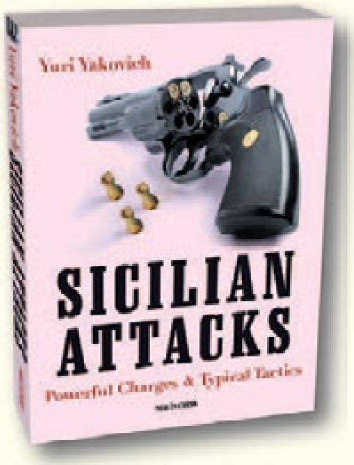
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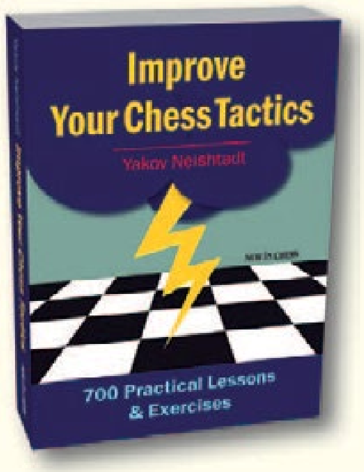
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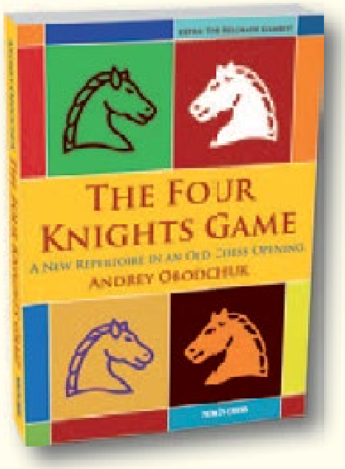
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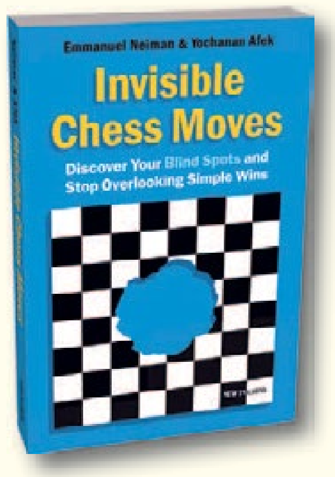
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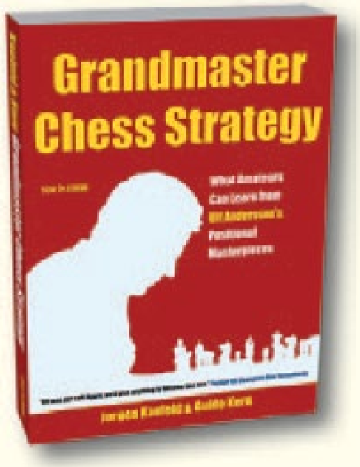
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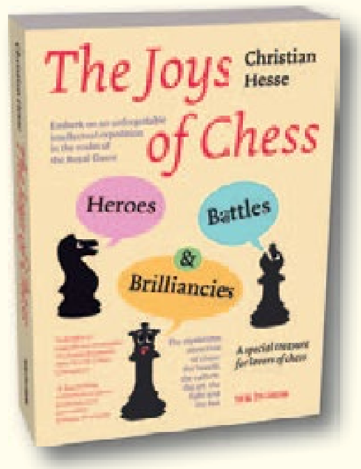
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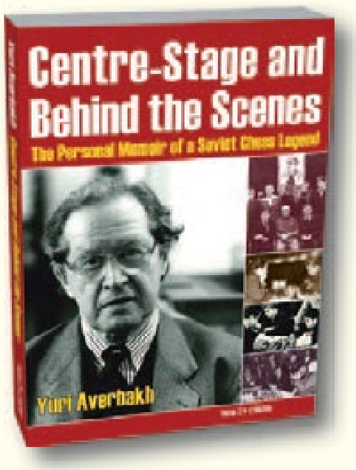
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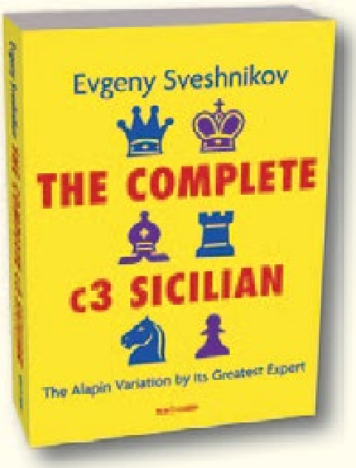
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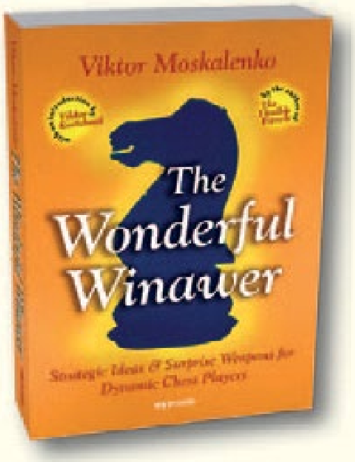
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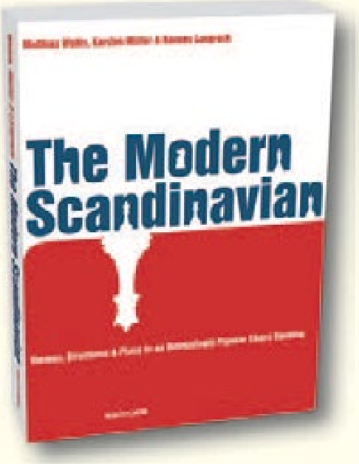
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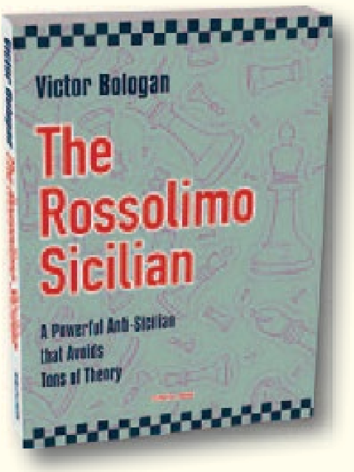
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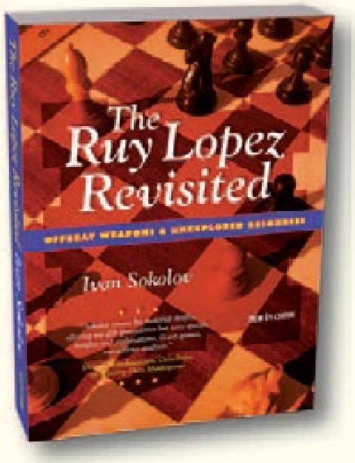
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Jan Timman

The fine art of withdrawing

In the *Herald Tribune* of November 19th, I read that Jacqueline Piatigorsky had celebrated her one hundredth birthday. She is a scion of the Rothschild family. In the 1950s and ’60s she was one of the strongest players in the US, but her main claim to fame are the two big Piatigorsky tournaments of 1963 and 1966.

I was reminded of the heroes of yesteryear: Petrosian, Spassky and Fischer.

On the same November day the *WhyChess* website published the following quote: ‘It rarely happens that you play a game and don’t understand a thing – what was going on, where you went wrong, who was better.’

I couldn’t help wondering whether the heroes of yesteryear would ever have said something like this after a game. Not Petrosian and Fischer, it seemed to me. Those two were too sure of what they were doing. Spassky was a different case. He was sometimes assailed by uncertainty.

The quote is from Kramnik after his bizarre game against Magnus Carlsen in Round 3 of the Tal Memorial. No, you didn’t see such games in the Piatigorsky tournaments, where everyone played according to the classical rules. But it must be said that a game like this is pretty unique even today.

‘I can hardly recall a more ridiculous game played at such high level than this one,’ Giri observed.

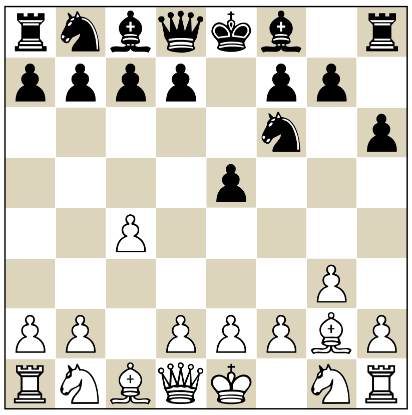
The main reason was Carlsen’s opening play. Every chess player must at some stage or other have wondered what would happen if you gave away several tempos in the opening: would this mean that your opponent would already be winning? In practice this is unlikely to happen, and so the question was left hanging. But Carlsen was so kind as to put it to the test.

> **‘Every chess player must at some stage or other have wondered what would happen if you gave away several tempos in the opening: would this mean that your opponent would already be winning?’**

EO 24.10 – A20
Vladimir Kramnik
Magnus Carlsen
Moscow 2011

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 h6

This strange waiting move has been known for 30 years, but has gained a small measure of popularity only recently. Black does not want to play the Bremer, and is waiting for the white knight to appear on c3, after which he can still develop his bishop to b4. Carlsen had played this move before in the 2006 Norwegian championship – against Ostenstad.

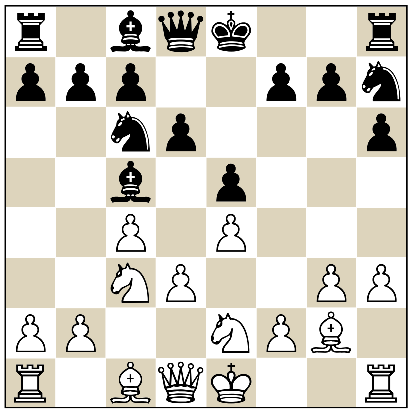


4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.e4

A logical move. White is playing a system in which Black’s extra move is definitely no good to him.

A few days later, Dominguez played 5.d3 against Fedorchuk in the Spanish team competition, intending to take his bishop to d2 and continue to develop his kingside. In this game, too, Black failed to reach equality.

5...♘c6 6.♘ge2 ♗c5 7.d3 d6 8.h3 ♘h7



MARIA BOLSHAKOVA

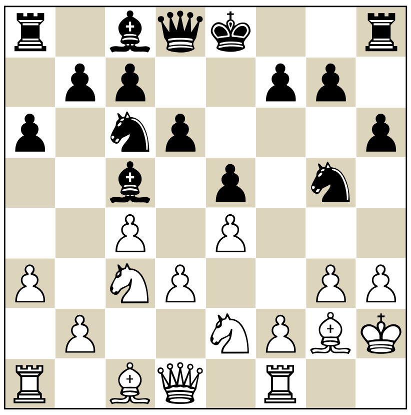
The fun continued at the press conference where Vladimir Kramnik and Magnus Carlsen, interviewed by Ilya Levitov, tried to get a firmer grip on the bedazzling game they had played.

It is hard to criticize this move. Black wants to prove that his third move has not been a waste of time and intends to transfer his knight to d4. It's a time-consuming plan that will turn out to fall short of solving his opening problems. But the same may be said about all other moves.

9.a3

The familiar pattern in this type of position. White has a spatial advantage and is playing on two wings.

9...a6 10.0-0 ♘g5 11.♔h2

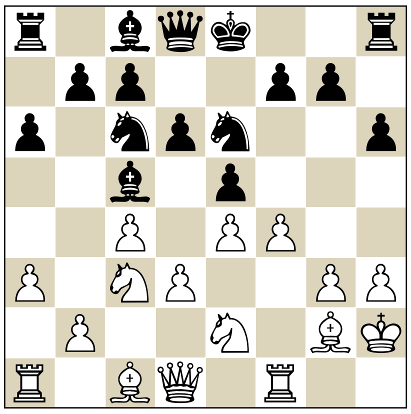


11...♘e6

Both Houdini and Rybka 4 evince an unhealthy preference for the clumsy 11...♕d7. It's true that this forces White to show his hand on the kingside, but after 12.h4 he can await developments with confidence. Black will have to waste even more time with his queen. The computers are clearly not very good yet in handling these kinds of positions.

12.f4

Time to expand White's territory on the kingside.

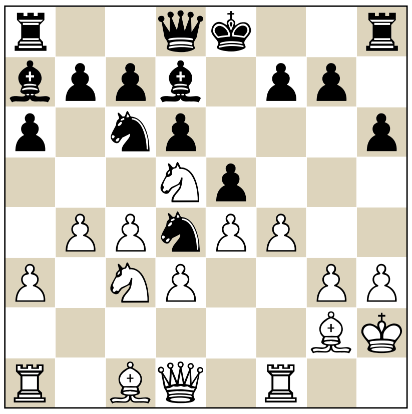


12...♗d7

'I just couldn't find a decent way to play,' Carlsen said afterwards, and it's true that it is not easy to find purposeful moves here. Afterwards, both players agreed that 12...♗a7 would have been better for Black, as he will need to play this at some stage anyway.

Yet Black can afford to play the text without immediately finding himself in a lost position.

13.b4 ♗a7 14.♘d5 ♘ed4 15.♘ec3



15...♗e6

But this is too much. Black wastes a move with the bishop in the knowledge that he is going to have to waste another one. Afterwards, Carlsen said that he had wanted to castle, but then changed his mind because it seemed too dangerous.

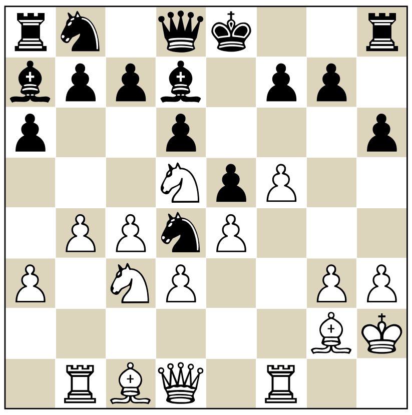
But White does not have a surprise attack. Probably his best bet is to calmly continue with 16.♖b1 in order to maintain his pressure on the enemy position.

Despite all the wasted tempos, the black position is remarkably strong, mainly because Black has solid control of the central square d4 and no real weaknesses.

16.f5

Of course. The black bishop is driven back, since swapping on d5 would boil down to positional capitulation.

16...♗d7 17.♖b1 ♘b8



Carlsen withdraws another piece, but this time out of sheer necessity. Black has no other plan than to drive off the mighty white steed on d5.

18.c5 Kramnik continues to play on both wings. This is strategically correct, but also very demanding. With each move, White will have to assess very accurately how to coordinate his actions on both wings.

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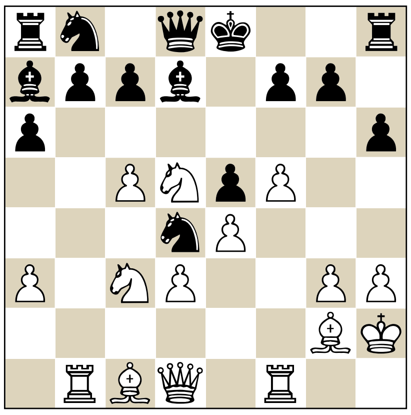
18...dxc5 19.bxc5

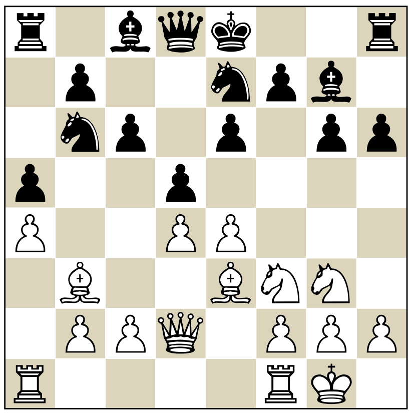


19...♗c8

The bishop is withdrawn as well, and again Black had very little choice in the matter. After 19...♗xc5 20.♖xb7 White would have few problems shattering the black defensive lines. The text is extremely passive, but at the same time it preserves the elasticity of the black position. If White eventually fails to get his act together, Black may end up strategically better. In the further course of the game, this will become abundantly clear.

I remember the following game causing quite a stir. It was played even before the Piatigorsky tournaments. Unzicker-Petrosian, Varna 1962:

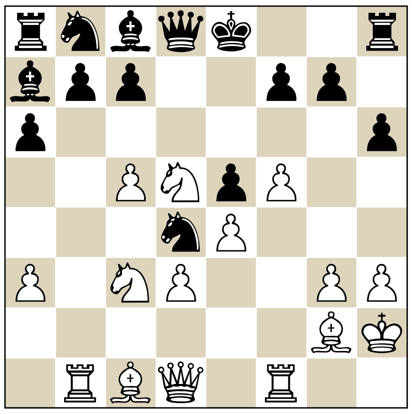
1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6 4.♘c3 ♘d7 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗b3 c6 7.a4 a5 8.0-0 e6 Petrosian has gone for a very unusual opening move. It is a kind of Hedgehog system in which he continues to operate on the first three ranks. **9.♗e3 ♘e7 10.♕d2 h6 11.♘e2 d5 12.♘g3**



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

12...♔f8 Amazing. He doesn't care at all that White has already mobilized all his pieces and now goes for an artificial castling manoeuvre. **13.♘e5 ♔g8 14.c3 ♘d7** The knight is withdrawn to pull the sting from White's initiative. **15.♘xd7 ♕xd7 16.♖fe1 b6 17.♗c2 ♗a6 18.h4** This would have been strong some moves earlier, but now it misses the mark. With 18.e5, White could have preserved his positional plus. **18...dxe4 19.♘xe4 ♘d5** The first black piece has passed the sixth rank. Black has solved his problems. **20.♘g3 ♕c7 21.♗b3** Unzicker starts playing haphazardly, with the result that Black takes over the reins. **21...♖d8 22.♘e2 ♕e7 23.g3 c5 24.♗xd5 ♖xd5 25.♘f4 ♖d6 26.♕c2 cxd4 27.cxd4 ♕d7 28.♖ac1 ♗f6 29.♘d3 ♗xd3 30.♕xd3 ♔g7** And finally the artificial castling manoeuvre is completed. Black is better and won on move 72.

What Carlsen does here is even more amazing, but also riskier. White could have got a large and probably decisive advantage. The critical point of the game has been reached.



20.♕h5

This queen sortie looks strong, but eventually proves to be a shot in the dark. White had the following alternatives:

A) 20.♕g4. Indicated by Giri and Shipov as the winning continuation, the point being that after 20...♔f8 21.♕h5 f6 White will have the spectacular sacrifice 22.♘xf6!. After 22...gxf6 23.♗xh6+ Black is forced to give an exchange, after which White is holding all the trumps. But the crucial move is 20...g5!. By pushing the g-pawn Black manages to

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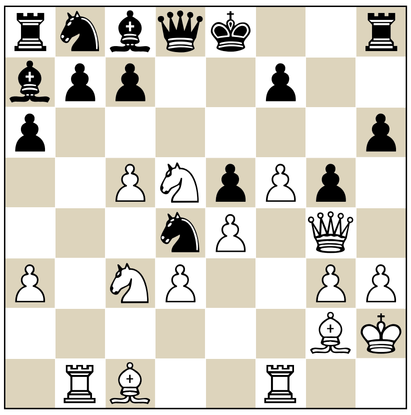
keep the position as closed as possible. White has the following options:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A1) 21.fxg6. A spectacular queen sacrifice, which just fails to win. After 21...♗xg4 22.♘f6+ ♕xf6! 23.♖xf6 ♗e6 24.♘d5 ♗xd5 25.exd5 fxg6 26.♖xb7 ♗xc5 White has sufficient compensation for the piece, but no more;

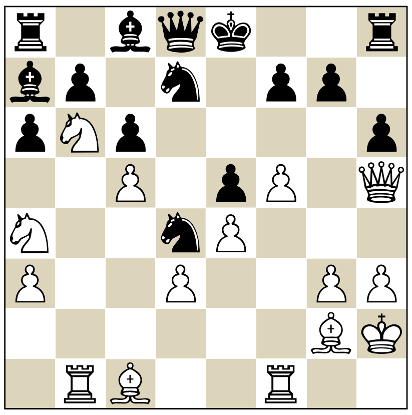
A2) 21.♕h5 c6! 22.♗xg5 ♕xg5 23.♘c7+ ♔e7 24.♕xg5+ hxg5 25.♘xa8 ♗xc5 26.♘a4 ♘d7, and although White is a full exchange up, he can hardly hope for an advantage. The black knight on d4 is stronger than ever.

B) 20.f6! g6 21.♘a4. This is the correct approach. White abandons his plans of a direct attack and starts playing for purely positional considerations. He wants to eliminate the d4 knight, the fulcrum of Black's position: 21...♘d7 22.♗e3! ♘xc5 23.♗xd4! exd4 24.♘xc5 ♗xc5 25.e5, and White is in complete control. There are two echo variations: 25...♖a7 is met by 26.♖c1 b6 27.♖xc5! bxc5 28.♕c1, followed by 29.♕xc5, with a winning advantage; and 25...♖b8 26.♕c1 b6 27.♕xc5! bxc5 28.♖xb8, when Black is again tied hand and foot.

After the text the position is probably dynamically balanced.

20...♘d7 With the point that Black will be OK after 21.♗g5 ♕xg5 22.♘xc7+ ♔d8 23.♕xg5+ hxg5 24.♘xa8 ♗xc5. The strength of the centralized black knight will continue to severely limit White's choices.

21.♘a4 c6 22.♘db6

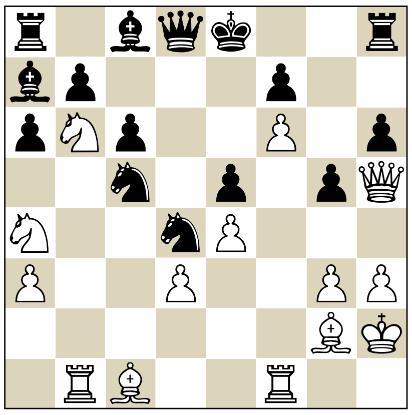


22...♘xc5!
A strong move. Black is now strategically superior on the queenside.

23.f6 White's play was based on this advance. Things are looking dangerous for Black.

23...g5! Carlsen is playing extremely strongly here. With the text he manages to keep the kingside as good as closed at the cost of a pawn.

After 23...gxf6? 24.♗g5! White would have taken control.

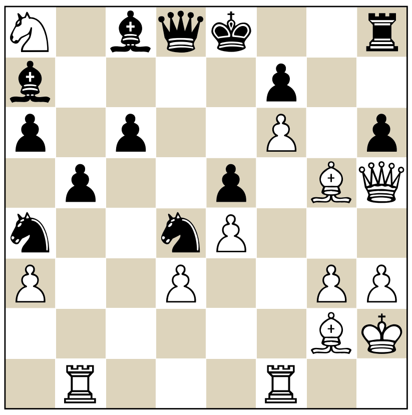


24.♗xg5
The most obvious continuation. White had two interesting alternatives:

A) 24.♘xa8 ♘xa4 25.h4 (exploiting the fact that Black cannot really capture on h4, and also threatening the strong 26.hxg5) 25...♖g8 26.♕xh6 gxh4 27.gxh4, and now Black has a hidden way to maintain the balance: 27...♔d7! 28.♕h5 ♕e8, and the position is dynamically balanced.

B) 24.♘xc8. Carlsen suggested this swap during the post-mortem. After 24...♕xc8 25.♘xc5 ♗xc5 26.♗xg5 Black can start aiming for queenside castling with 26...♕c7, after which he would be OK.

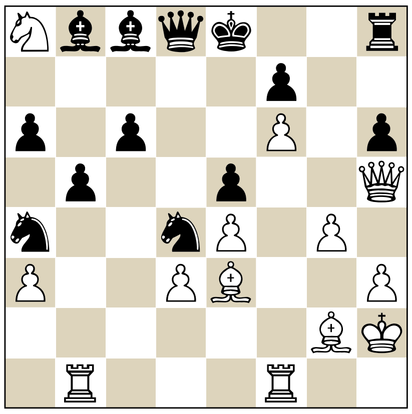
24...♘xa4 25.♘xa8 b5



An incredible position. Black still has all his minor pieces and dominates the queenside. But White is (still) an exchange up and reigns supreme on the other wing. He will have to prevent Black from rounding up the stray knight on a8 at no cost to himself.

26.♗e3 ♗b8
Stronger than 26...♕d6, after which the advance of the white g-pawn would be very strong.

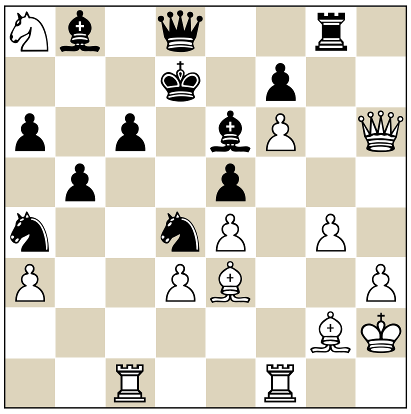
27.g4
Threatening 28.g5.



27...♖g8
Black could also have ignored the threat by going 27...♗e6, when the play will get very sharp. This is borne out by the following long variation, which contains some spectacular turns: 28.g5 c5 29.g6 fxg6 30.♕xg6+ ♗f7 31.♕g7 ♖g8 32.♕xh6 ♗d6 33.♗xd4 exd4+ 34.e5 ♗xe5+ 35.♔h1 ♖xg2! 36.♔xg2 ♕xa8+ 37.♔g1 ♕d5 38.♖be1 ♔d7 39.♕h7 ♗d6 40.♖f5 ♕b3 41.♖g5 ♔c6 42.♖g7 ♕a2! 43.♖xf7 ♕h2+, with perpetual check.

28.♕xh6 ♗e6 29.♖bc1 ♔d7
Black has ushered his king from the danger zone, and can now start thinking about capturing the white knight.

For White, drastic measures are called for now.



30.♗xd4!

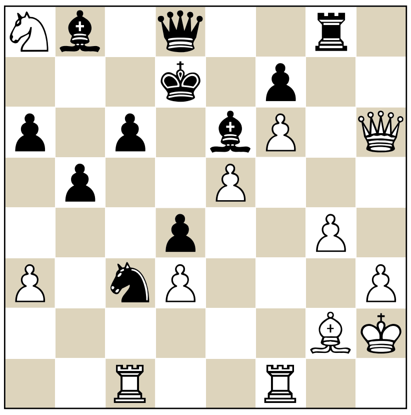
Despite their lack of time, both players are playing excellently here. White tries to open up the position as much as he can.

30...exd4+ 31.e5

The point of the previous move. It is very important for the long diagonal to be opened for the white king's bishop.

31...♘c3

Screening off the c-file. Curiously enough, now that Black's first mighty steed has been eliminated, he can immediately offer a strong foothold to the other one.



32.♖xc3!

In style! White will have to eliminate the second knight as well to prevent Black from claiming a strategic advantage.

32...♗xe5+

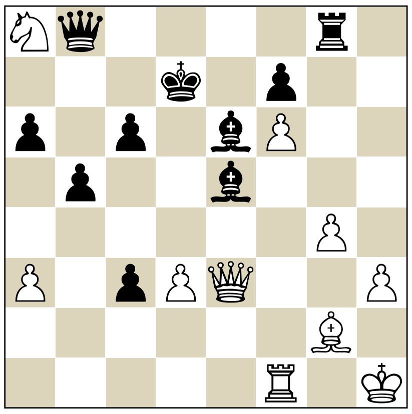
A necessary intermediate move. After 32...dxc3 33.♕e3 White would be better.

33.♔h1 dxc3 34.♕e3

The point of the previous moves. White will not only save his knight, but is also girding his loins to resume his attack on the black king.

34...♕b8

The only way to keep control of the position.



35.♕c5

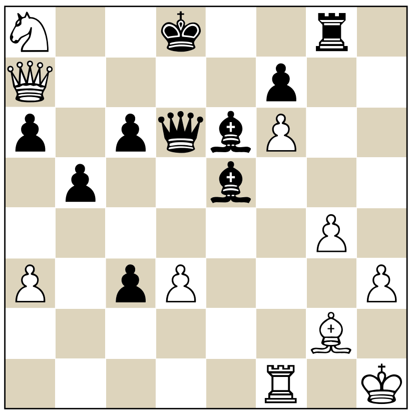
In itself an understandable move in time-trouble, but after Black's reply it fails to find the mark.

Necessary was 35.d4, intending to open the centre and eliminate the dangerous c-pawn. The position is still dynamically balanced, as witness the line 35...♗d6 36.d5! cxd5 37.♘b6+ ♔d8 38.♘xd5 ♗xd5 39.♗xd5 ♕c7 40.♖c1 ♗f4 41.♕e7+!, and the players will liquidate to a drawn endgame.

35...♕d6

This is how Black hangs on to his two c-pawns for the moment. Because White has no foothold in the centre, Black is enjoying a large, probably decisive advantage.

36.♕a7+ ♔d8



37.♕xa6

An important alternative was 37.♘b6, after which Carlsen would have been forced, in time-trouble, to find the strong move 37...♖g6! in order to stay on top. The idea behind the move is clear: he wants to take on f6. After 38.♕a8+ ♕b8 39.♕xc6 ♖xf6 40.♖xf6 ♗xf6 41.♘d5 ♗g7 the bishop pair should guarantee the win.

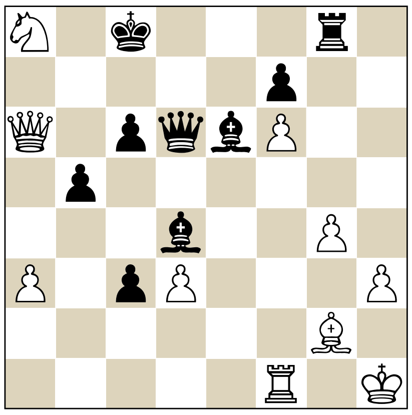
37...♗d4!

Again the best move. Black increases his influence in the centre.

38.♕a5+ ♔c8 39.♕a6+ ♔d8

With the time-control looming, Black understandably repeats moves.

40.♕a5+ ♔c8 41.♕a6+



With time-trouble a thing of the past, Carlsen sank into deep thought, as a result of which he claimed a draw. After 41...♔d8 the same position would have arisen for the third time.

Carlsen's claim surprised the experts, who had used their computers to establish that Black would have been better after 41...♔b8 42.♘b6 ♗c8!. White is now forced to swap his bishop, after which play will continue as follows: 43.♘xc8 ♖xc8 44.a4 (otherwise the queen will remain locked in) 44...b4 45.♕c4 ♕c5 46.♕b3, and now Black can either go 46...♗e5 or 46...♗xf6, and although the black passed pawns have been blocked, they are still very strong.

It is nevertheless understandable that Carlsen settled for a draw. He had fought a hard and complicated battle, and at such a point a move like 42...♗c8 may seem strange. In a position with opposite-coloured bishops and for the rest only major pieces, the attacking player usually has an advantage. Only the fact that Black will keep his c6 pawn keeps the white attack in check. But this was not at all easy to see. ■

Just Checking

Georg Meier

CURRENT ELO: **2659**

DATE OF BIRTH: **26 August 1987**

PLACE OF BIRTH: **Trier, Germany**

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: **Lubbock, Texas, USA**

What is your favourite colour?
Blue, especially when I see the ocean.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Good food is best with good company and I like a wide range of food types.

And what drink?
Fresh orange juice.

Who is your favourite author?
Ephraim Kishon.

What was the best or most interesting book you ever read?
I still have to read a book that deserves that label.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
The Godfather trilogy, closely followed by *Seven*.

What is your favourite TV series?
I have to reveal my dark secret here: I don't watch any series!

Do you have a favourite actor?
Can't decide between Al Pacino and Anthony Hopkins.

And a favourite actress?
No.

What music do you like to listen to?
Depending on my mood, it can be anything between classical and pop.

Do you have a favourite painter or artist?
Pablo Picasso, since I saw the movie *Surviving Picasso*.

What do you see as your best result ever?
European Team Champion 2011 with the German team.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Vasily Smyslov. Since reading his game collection as a child I feel sympathy for him, and it makes me sad that I could never meet him. His play and attitude to chess left a lasting impression on me and formed my style.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Vasily Smyslov: *Endgame Virtuoso*.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Games only arouse my interest when I feel like learning something. In this sense, Valery Salov's endgame technique amazes me time and again.

What is the best chess country in the world?
There is an appreciation and, in some cases, love for chess that I felt only in Armenia and Russia, which made me happy to be a chess player. A feeling I've sadly missed in Germany.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
The chess players I have got to know are as different from one another as anyone else, but they do tend to be smart.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
From my point of view: yes, they're typically male.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
The inventor of a time-machine.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
My mother, brother and Paul Bocuse ☺.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Another language and how to convert winning advantages.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
There is no material thing that I'd miss.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
Introducing a new title, 'Super Grandmaster'. A title norm could be reached with a 2750 performance and the minimum Elo requirement might be something like 2650+, kept for 50 games.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
I have zero tolerance for a certain rule.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess World Champion?
I can't imagine what the chess world will look like by then, but China has pretty good odds.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'With the help of chess I shaped my character. More than anything else, chess teaches you to be objective. You can only become a great chess master if you become aware of your mistakes and shortcomings – is this not exactly as it is in life itself?' (Alexander Alekhine)

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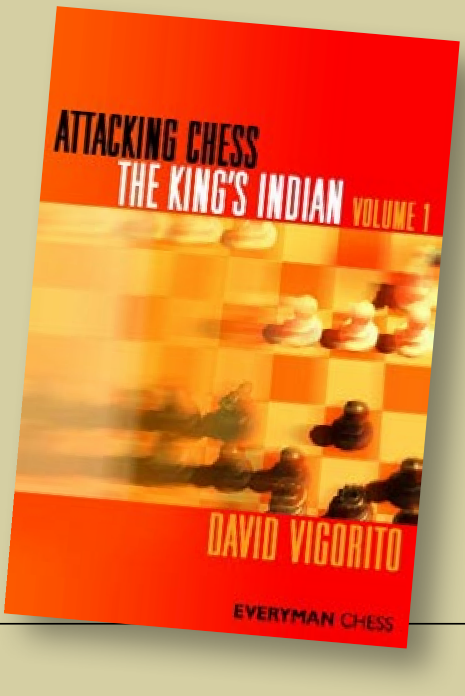
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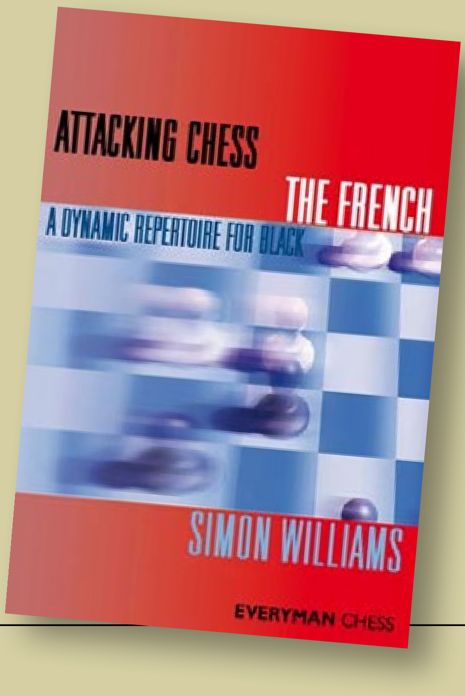
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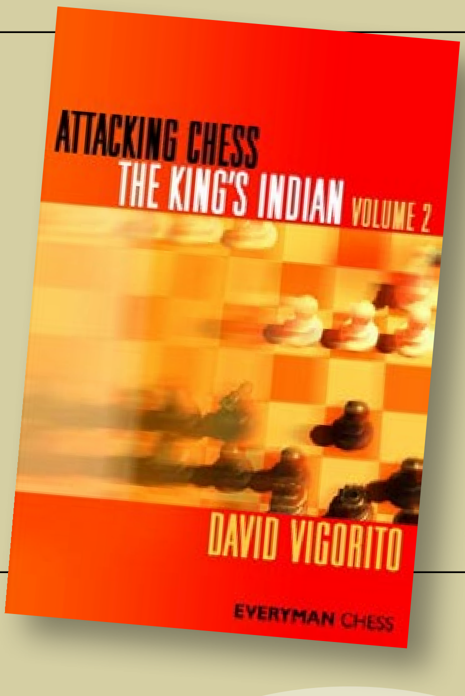
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